

MARCH 1913

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THE  
**RED BOOK**  
MAGAZINE



STORIES BY  
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Michael Williams  
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THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE THE GREAT SHOP WINDOW OF AMERICA

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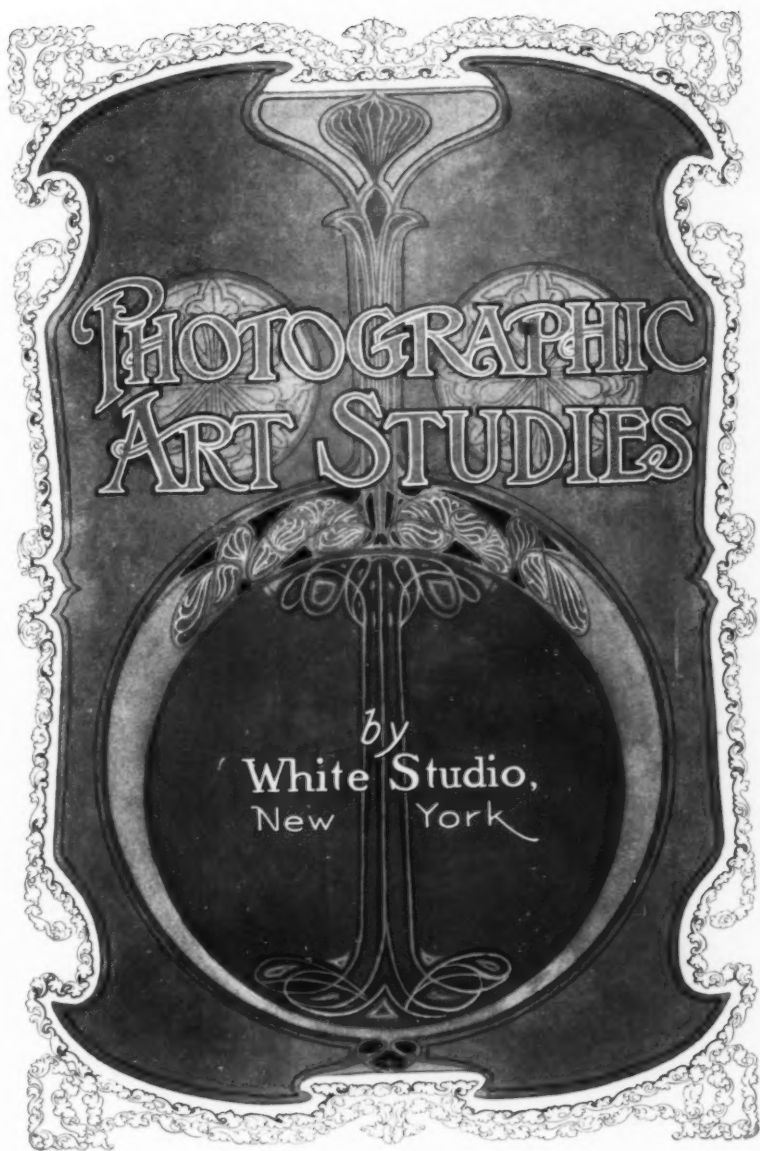
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in "The Lady of the Slipper"  
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A splintering crash, followed instantly by a wild,  
appalling cry, sent my heart into my mouth.

*From "THE GAME AS PLAYED," the latest of L. I. Beeston's stories of the Hon. Derek Tredgold.*

March  
1913

THE  
**RED BOOK**  
MAGAZINE

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RAY LONG, Editor

# The Mouse

by JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

Author of "Kazan," etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY NORMAN BORCHARDT

**W**HY, you onery little cuss," said Falkner, pausing with a forkful of beans half way to his mouth. "Where in God A'mighty's name did *you* come from?"

It was against all of Jim's crude but honest ethics of the big wilderness to take the Lord's name in vain, and the words he uttered were filled more with the softness of a prayer than the harshness of profanity. He was big, and his hands were hard and knotted, and his face was covered with a coarse red scrub of beard. But his hair was blonde, and his eyes were blue, and just now they were filled with unbounded amazement. Slowly the fork loaded with beans descended to his plate, and he said again, barely above a whisper:

"Where in God A'mighty's name *did* you come from?"

There was nothing human in the one

room of his wilderness cabin to speak to. At the first glance there was nothing alive in the room, with the exception of Jim Falkner himself. There was not even a dog, for Jim had lost his one dog weeks before. And yet he spoke, and his eyes glistened, and for a full minute after that he sat as motionless as a rock. Then something moved—at the farther end of the rough board table. It was a mouse—a soft, brown, bright-eyed little mouse, not as large as his thumb. It was not like the mice Jim had been accustomed to see in the North woods, the larger, sharp-nosed, rat-like creatures which sprung his traps now and then, and he gave a sort of gasp through his beard.

"I'm as crazy as a loon if it isn't a sure-enough down-home mouse, just like we used to catch in the kitchen down in Ohio," he told himself. And for a third time he asked. "Now where in God

A'mighty's name *did you* come from?"

The mouse made no answer. It had humped itself up into a little ball, and was eying Jim with the keenest of suspicion.

"You're a thousand miles from home, old man," Falkner addressed it, still without a movement. "You're a clean thousand miles straight north of the kind o' civilization you was born in, and I want to know how you got here. By George—is it possible—you got mixed up in that box of stuff *she* sent up? Did you come from *her*?"

He made a sudden movement, as if he expected an answer, and, in a flash the mouse had scurried off the table and had disappeared under his bunk.

"The little cuss!" said Falkner. "He's sure got his nerve!"

He went on eating his beans, and when he had done he lighted a lamp, for the half Arctic darkness was falling early, and began to clear away the dishes. When he had done he put a scrap of bannock and a few beans on the corner of the table.

"I'll bet he's hungry, the little cuss," he said. "A thousand miles—in that box!"

He sat down close to the sheet-iron box stove, which was glowing red-hot, and filled his pipe. Kerosene was a precious commodity, and he had turned down the lamp wick until he was mostly in gloom. Outside a storm was wailing down across the Barrens from the North. He could hear the swish of the spruce-boughs overhead, and those moaning, half-shrieking sounds that always came with storm from out of the North, and sometimes fooled even him into thinking they were human cries. They had seemed more and more human to him during the past three days, and he was growing afraid. Once or twice strange thoughts had come into his head, and he had tried to fight them down. He had known of men whom loneliness had driven mad—and he was terribly lonely. He shivered as a piercing blast of wind filled with a mourning wail swept over the cabin.

And that day, too, he had been taken with a touch of fever. It burned more hotly in his blood to-night, and he knew that it was the loneliness—the emptiness

of the world about him, the despair and black foreboding that came to him with the first early twilights of the Long Night. For he was in the edge of that Long Night. For weeks he would only now and then catch a glimpse of the sun. He shuddered.

A hundred and fifty miles to the south and east there was a Hudson's Bay Post. Eighty miles south was the nearest trapper's cabin he knew of. Two months before he had gone down to the post, with a thick beard to cover his face, and had brought back supplies—and the box. His wife had sent up the box to him, only it had come to him as "John Blake" instead of Jim Falkner, his right name. There were things in it for him to wear, and pictures of the sweet-faced wife who was still filled with prayer and hope for him, and of the kid, their boy. "He is walking now," she had written to him, "and a dozen times a day he goes to your picture and says, 'Pa-pa—Pa-pa'—and every night we talk about you before we go to bed, and pray God to send you back to us soon."

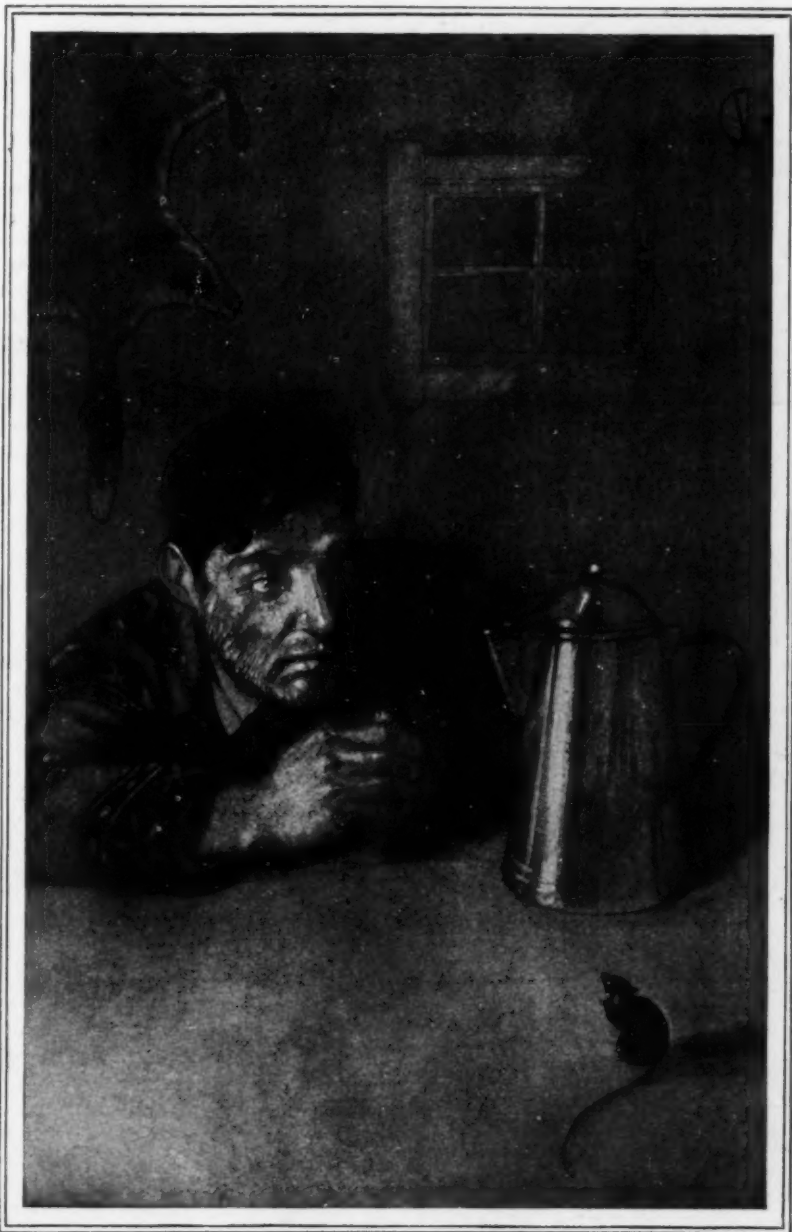
"God bless 'em!" breathed Jim.

He had not lighted his pipe, and there was something in his eyes that shimmered and glistened in the dull light. And then, as he sat silent, his eyes clearing, he saw that the little mouse had climbed back to the edge of the table. It did not eat the food he had placed there for it, but humped itself up in a tiny ball again, and its tiny shining eyes looked in his direction.

"You're not hungry," said Jim, and he spoke aloud. "*You're* lonely, too—that's it!"

A strange thrill shot through him at the thought, and he wondered again if he was mad at the longing that filled him—the desire to reach out and snuggle the little creature in his hand, and hold it close up to his bearded face, and *talk to it*! He laughed, and drew his stool a little more into the light. The mouse did not run. He edged nearer and nearer, until his elbows rested on the table, and a curious feeling of pleasure took the place of his loneliness when he saw that the mouse was looking at him, and yet seemed unafraid.

"Don't be scairt," he said softly,



"I killed a man," he repeated; "I killed him,  
old man, an' you'd have done the same."

speaking directly to it. "I wont hurt you. No sir, I'd—I'd cut off a hand before I'd do that. I aint had any company but you for two months. I aint seen a human face, or heard a human voice—nothing—nothing but them shrieks 'n' wails 'n' baby-cryings out there in the wind. I wont hurt you—"

His voice was almost pleading in its gentleness. And for the tenth time that day he felt, with his fever, a sickening dizziness in his head. For a moment or two his vision was blurred, but he could still see the mouse—farther away, it seemed to him.

"I don't s'pose you've killed anyone—or anything," he said, and his voice seemed thick and distant to him. "Mice don't kill, do they? They live on—cheese. But I have—I've killed. I killed a man. That's why I'm here."

His dizziness almost overcame him, and he leaned heavily against the table. Still the little mouse did not move. Still he could see it through the strange gauzy veil before his eyes.

"I killed—a man," he repeated, and now he was wondering why the mouse did not say something at that remarkable confession. "I killed him, old man, an' you'd have done the same if you'd been in my place. I didn't mean to. I struck too hard. But I found 'im in my cabin, an' *she* was fighting—fighting him until her face was scratched, an' her clothes torn,—God bless her dear heart!—fighting him to the last breath, an' I come just in time! He didn't think I'd be back for a day—a black-hearted devil we'd fed when he came to our door hungry. I killed him. And they've hunted me ever since. They'll put a rope round my neck, an' choke me to death if they catch me—because I came in time to save her! That's law!

"But they wont find me. I've been up here a year now, and in the spring I'm going down there—where you come from—back to the Girl and the Kid. The policemen wont be looking for me then. An' we're going to some other part of the world, an' live happy. She's waitin' for me, she an' the kid, an' they know I'm coming in the spring. Yessir, I killed a man. An' they want to kill me for it. That's the law—Canadian law—the law that wants an eye for an eye and a tooth

for a tooth, an' where there aint no extenuatin' circumstance. They call it murder. But it wasn't—was it?"

He waited for an answer. The mouse seemed going farther and farther away from him. He leaned more heavily on the table.

"It wasn't—was it?" he persisted.

His arms reached out; his head dropped forward, and the little mouse scurried to the floor. But Falkner did not know that it had gone.

"I killed him, an' I guess I'd do it again," he said, and his words were only a whisper. "An' to-night they're prayin' for me down there—she 'n' the kid—an' he's sayin', 'Pa-pa—Pa-pa;' an' they sent you up—to keep me comp'ny—"

His head dropped wearily upon his arms. The red stove crackled, and turned slowly black. In the cabin it grew darker, except where the dim light burned on the table. Outside the storm wailed and screeched down across the Barren. And after a time the mouse came back. It looked at Jim Falkner. It came nearer, until it touched the unconscious man's sleeve. More daringly it ran over his arm. It smelled of his fingers. Then it returned to the corner of the table, and began eating of the food that Fordney had placed there for it.

## II

The wick in the lamp had burned low when Falkner raised his head. The stove was black and cold. Outside, the storm still raged, and it was the shivering shriek of it over the cabin that Falkner first heard. He felt terribly dizzy, and there was a sharp, knife-like pain just back of his eyes. By the gray light that came through the one window he knew that what was left of Arctic day had come. He rose to his feet, and staggered about like a drunken man as he rebuilt the fire, and he tried to laugh as the truth dawned upon him that he had been sick, and that he had rested for hours with his head on the table. His back seemed broken. His legs were numb, and hurt him when he stepped on them. He swung his arms a little to bring back circulation, and rubbed his hands over the fire that began to crackle in the stove.

It was *the* sickness that had overcome him—he knew that. But the thought of it did not appall him as it had yesterday, and the day before. There seemed to be something in the cabin now that comforted and soothed him, something that took away a part of the loneliness that was driving him mad. Even as he searched about him, peering into the dark corners and at the bare walls, a word formed on his lips, and he half smiled. It was a woman's name—Hester. And a warmth entered into him. The pain left his head. For the first time in weeks he felt *different*. And slowly he began to realize what had wrought the change. He was not alone. A message had come to him from the one who was waiting for him a thousand miles away: something that lived, and breathed, and was as lonely as himself. It was the little mouse.

He looked about eagerly, his eyes brightening, but the mouse was gone. He could not hear it. There seemed nothing unusual to him in the words he spoke aloud to himself.

"I'm goin' to call it after the Kid," he chuckled. "I'm goin' to call it Little Jim. I wonder if it's a girl mouse—or a boy mouse?"

He placed a pan of snow-water on the stove and began making his simple preparations for breakfast. For the first time in many days he felt actually hungry. And then all at once he stopped, and a low cry that was half joy and half wonder broke from his lips. With tensely gripped hands and eyes that shone with a strange light he stared straight at the blank surface of the log wall—through it—and a thousand miles away. He remembered *that* day—years ago—the scenes of which came to him now as though they had been but yesterday. It was afternoon, in the glorious summer, and he had gone to Hester's home. Only the day before Hester had promised to be his wife, and he remembered how fidgety and uneasy and yet wondrously happy he was as he sat out on the big white veranda, waiting for her to put on her pink muslin dress, which went so well with the gold of her hair and the blue of her eyes. And as he sat there, Hester's maltese pet came up the steps, bringing

in its jaws a tiny, quivering brown mouse. It was playing with the almost lifeless little creature when Hester came through the door.

He heard again the low cry that came from her lips then. In an instant she had snatched the tiny, limp thing from between the cat's paws, and had faced him. He was laughing at her, but the glow in her blue eyes sobered him. "I didn't think *you* would take pleasure in that, Jim," she said. "It's only a mouse, but it's alive, and I can feel its poor little heart beating!"

They had saved it, and he, a little ashamed at the smallness of the act, had gone with Hester to the barn and made a nest for it in the hay. But the wonderful words that he remembered were these: "Perhaps some day a little mouse will help you, Jim!" Hester had spoken laughingly. And her words had come true!

All the time that Falkner was preparing and eating his breakfast he watched for the mouse, but it did not appear. Then he went to the door. It swung outward, and it took all his weight to force it open. On one side of the cabin the snow was drifted almost to the roof. Ahead of him he could barely make out the dark shadow of the scrub spruce forest beyond the little clearing he had made. He could hear the spruce-tops wailing and twisting in the storm, and the snow and wind stung his face, and half blinded him.

It was dark—dark with that gray and maddening gloom that yesterday would have driven him still nearer to the verge of madness. But this morning he laughed as he listened to the wailings in the air and stared out into the ghostly chaos. It was not the thought of his loneliness that came to him now, but the thought that he was *safe*. The Law could not reach him now, even if it knew where he was. And before it began its hunt for him again in the spring he would be hiking southward, to the Girl and the baby, and it would still be hunting for him when they three would be making a new home for themselves in some other part of the world. For the first time in months he was almost happy. He closed and bolted the door, and began to *whistle*. He was



He stumbled over a stool and fell to the floor.  
Before he could rise a strange weight was upon him.

amazed at the change in himself, and wonderingly he stared at his reflection in the cracked bit of mirror against the wall. He grinned, and addressed himself aloud.

"You need a shave," he told himself. "You'd scare fits out of anything alive! Now that we've got comp'ny we've got to spruce up, 'n' look civilized."

It took him an hour to get rid of his heavy beard. His face looked almost boyish again. He was inspecting himself in the mirror when he heard a sound that turned him slowly toward the table. The little mouse was nosing about his tin plate. For a few moments Falkner watched it, fearing to move. Then he cautiously began to approach the table.

"Hello there, old chap," he said, trying to make his voice soft and ingratiating. "Pretty late for breakfast, aint you?"

At his approach the mouse humped itself into a motionless ball and watched him. To Falkner's delight it did not run away when he reached the table and sat down. He laughed softly.

"You aint afraid, are you?" he asked. "We're goin' to be chums, aint we? Yes-sir, we're goin' to be chums!"

For a full minute the mouse and the man looked steadily at each other. Then the mouse moved deliberately to a crumb of bannock and began nibbling at its breakfast.

### III

For ten days there was only an occasional lull in the storm that came from out of the North. Before those ten days were half over, Jim and the mouse understood each other. The little mouse itself solved the problem of their nearer acquaintance by running up Falkner's leg one morning while he was at breakfast, and coolly investigating him from the strings of his moccasin to the collar of his blue shirt. After that it showed no fear of him, and a few days later would nestle in the hollow of his big hand and nibble fearlessly at the bannock which Falkner would offer it. Then Jim took to carrying it about with him in his coat pocket. That seemed to suit the mouse immensely, and when Jim went to bed

nights, or it grew too warm for him in the cabin, he would hang the coat over his bunk, with the mouse still in it, so that it was not long before the little creature made up its mind to take full possession of the pocket. It intimated as much to Falkner on the tenth and last day of the storm, when it began very business-like operations of building a nest of paper and rabbits' fur in the coat-pocket. Jim's heart gave a big and sudden jump of delight when he saw the work going on.

"Bless my soul, I wonder if it's a girl mouse an' we're goin' to have *babies*!" he gasped.

After that he did not wear the coat, through fear of disturbing the nest. The two became more and more friendly, until finally the mouse would sit on Jim's shoulder at meal time, and nibble at bannock. What little trouble the mouse caused only added to Falkner's love for it.

"He's a human little cuss," he told himself one day, as he watched the mouse busy at work caching away scraps of food, which it carried through a crack in the sapling floor. "He's that human I've got to put all my grub in the tin cans or we'll go short before spring!" His chief trouble was to keep his snowshoes out of his tiny companion's reach. The mouse had developed an unholy passion for *babiche*, the caribou skin thongs used in the web of the shoes, and one of the webs was half eaten away before Falkner discovered what was going on. At last he was compelled to suspend the shoes from a nail driven in one of the roof-beams.

In the evening, when the stove glowed hot, and a cotton wick sputtered in a pan of caribou grease on the table, Falkner's chief diversion was to tell the mouse all about his plans, and hopes, and what had happened in the past. He took an almost boyish pleasure in these one-sided entertainments—and yet, after all, they were not entirely one-sided, for the mouse would keep its bright, serious-looking little eyes on Falkner's face; it seemed to understand, if it could not talk.

Falkner loved to tell the little fellow of the wonderful days of four or five years ago away down in the sunny Ohio

valley where he had courted the Girl and where they lived before they moved to the farm in Canada. He tried to impress upon Little Jim's mind what it meant for a great big, unhandsome fellow like himself to be loved by a tender slip of a girl whose hair was like gold and whose eyes were as blue as the wood-violets. One evening he fumbled for a minute under his bunk and came back to the table with a worn and finger-marked manila envelope, from which he drew tenderly and with almost trembling care a long, shining tress of golden hair.

"That's *her's*," he said proudly, placing it on the table close to the mouse. "An' she's got so much of it you can't see her to the hips when she takes it down; an' out in the sun it shines like—like—glory!"

The stove door crashed open, and a number of coals fell out upon the floor. For a few minutes Falkner was busy, and when he returned to the table he gave a gasp of astonishment. The curl and the mouse were gone! Little Jim had almost reached its nest with its lovely burden when Falkner captured it.

"You little cuss!" he breathed reverently. "Now I *know* you come from her! I know it!"

In the weeks that followed the storm Falkner again followed his trap-line, and scattered poison-baits for the white foxes on the Barren. Early in January the second great storm of that year came from out of the North. It gave no warning, and Falkner was caught ten miles from camp. He was making a struggle for life before he reached the shack. He was exhausted, and half blinded. He could hardly stand on his feet when he staggered up against his own door. He could see nothing when he entered. He stumbled over a stool, and fell to the floor. Before he could rise a strange weight was upon him. He made no resistance, for the storm had driven the last ounce of strength from his body.

"It's been a long chase, but I've got you now, Falkner," he heard a triumphant voice say. And then came the dreaded formula, feared to the uttermost limits of the great Northern wilderness: "I warn you! You are my prisoner, in the name of His Majesty, the King!"

## IV

Corporal Carr, of the Royal Northwest Mounted, was a man without human sympathies. He was thin faced, with a square, bony jaw, and lips that formed a straight line. His eyes were greenish, like a cat's, and were constantly shifting. He was a beast of prey, as much as the wolf, the lynx, or the fox—and his prey was men. Only such a man as Carr, alone, would have braved the treacherous snows and the intense cold of the Arctic winter to run him down. Falkner knew that, as an hour later he looked over the roaring stove at his captor. About Carr there was something of the unpleasant quickness, the sinuous movement, of the little white ermine—the outlaw of the wilderness. His eyes were as merciless. At times Falkner caught the same red glint in them. And above his despair, the utter hopelessness of his situation, there rose in him an intense hatred and loathing of the man.

Falkner's hands were securely tied behind him.

"I'd put the irons on you," Carr had explained in a hard, emotionless voice, "only I lost them somewhere back there."

Beyond that he had not said a dozen words. He had built up the fire, thawed himself out, and helped himself to food. Now, for the first time, he loosened up a bit.

"I've had a devil of a chase," he said bitterly, a cold glitter in his eyes as he looked at Falkner. "I've been after you three months, and now that I've got you this accursed storm is going to hold us up! And I left my dogs and outfit a mile back in the scrub."

"Better go after 'em," replied Falkner. "If you don't there wont be any dogs an' outfit by morning."

Corporal Carr rose to his feet and went to the window. In a moment he turned.

"I'll do that," he said. "Stretch yourself out on the bunk. I'll have to lace you down pretty tight to keep you from playing a trick on me."

There was something so merciless and brutal in his eyes and voice that Falkner felt like leaping upon him, even with his hands tied behind his back.

He was glad, however, that Carr had decided to go. He was filled with an overwhelming desire to be rid of him, if only for an hour.

He went to the bunk and lay down. Corporal Carr approached, pulling a roll of stout *babiche* cord from his pocket.

"If you don't mind you might tie my hands in front instead of behind," suggested Falkner.

"It's goin' to be mighty unpleas-  
ant to have 'em  
under m'. if I've  
got to 'lay here for  
an hour or two."

"Not on your  
life I wont tie  
'em in front!"  
snapped Carr, his  
little eyes glitter-  
ing. And then he  
gave a cackling  
laugh, and his  
eyes were as  
green as a cat's.  
"An' it wont be  
half so unpleas-  
ant as having  
something 'round  
your neck!" he  
joked.

"I wish I was  
free," breathed  
Falkner, his chest  
heaving. "I wish  
we could fight,  
man t' man. I'd  
be willing to  
hang then, just to  
have the chance  
to break your  
neck. You aint a  
man of the Law.  
You're a devil."

Carr laughed  
the sort of laugh that sends a chill up  
one's back, and drew the caribou-skin  
cord tight about Falkner's ankles.

"Can't blame me for being a little  
careful," he said in his revolting way.  
"By your hanging I become a Sergeant.  
That's my reward for running you  
down."

He lighted the lamp and filled the  
stove before he left the cabin. From the

door he looked back at Falkner, and his  
face was not like a man's, but like that of  
some terrible death-spirit, ghostly, and  
thin, and exultant in the dim glow of  
the lamp. As he opened the door the roar  
of the blizzard and a gust of snow filled  
the cabin. Then it closed, and a groan-  
ing curse fell from Falkner's lips. He  
strained fiercely at the thongs that

bound him, but  
after the first few  
minutes he lay  
still, breathing  
hard, knowing  
that every effort  
he made only  
tightened the  
caribou-skin cord  
that bound him.

On his back, he  
listened to the  
storm. It was  
filled with the  
same strange cries  
and moaning  
sound that had  
almost driven him  
to madness, and  
now they sent  
through him a  
shivering chill  
that he had not  
felt before, even  
in the darkest, and  
most hopeless  
hours of his lone-  
liness and despair.  
A breath that was  
almost a sob  
broke from his  
lips as a vision of  
the Girl and the  
Kid came to shut  
out from his ears  
the moaning tu-  
mult of the wind.



From the door he looked back at Falkner, and  
his face was not like a man's, but like  
that of some terrible death spirit.

A few hours before he had been filled  
with hope—almost happiness, and now  
he was lost. From such a man as Carr  
there was no hope for mercy, or of escape.  
Flat on his back, he closed his eyes, and  
tried to think—to scheme something that  
might happen in his favor, to foresee an  
opportunity that might give him one last  
chance. And then, suddenly, he heard a  
sound. It traveled over the blanket that

formed a pillow for his head. A cool, soft little nose touched his ear, and then tiny feet ran swiftly over his shoulder, and halted on his breast. He opened his eyes, and stared.

## V

"You little cuss!" breathed Falkner. A hundred times he had spoken those words, and each time they were of increasing wonder and adoration. "You little cuss!" he whispered again, and he chuckled aloud.

The mouse was humped on his breast in that curious little ball that it made of itself, and was eying him, Jim thought, in a questioning sort of way. "What's the matter with you?" it seemed to ask. "Where are your hands?"

And Jim answered:

"They've got me, old man. Now what the dickens are we going to do?"

The mouse began investigating. It examined his shoulder, the end of his chin, and ran along his arm as far as it could go.

"Now what do you think of that!" Falkner exclaimed softly. "The little cuss is wondering where my hands are!" Gently he rolled over on his side. "There they are," he said, "hitched tighter'n bark to a tree!"

He wiggled his fingers, and in a moment he felt the mouse. The little creature ran across the opened palm of his hand to his wrist, and then every muscle in Falkner's body grew tense, and one of the strangest cries that ever fell from human lips came from his. The mouse had found once more the dried hide-flesh of which the snowshoe webs were made. It had found *babiche*. And it had begun to gnaw!

In the minutes that followed Falkner scarcely breathed. He could feel the mouse when it worked. Above the stifled beating of his heart he could hear its tiny jaws. In those moments he knew that his last hope of life hung in the balance. Five, ten minutes passed, and not until then did he strain at the thongs that bound his wrists. Was that the bed that had snapped? Or was it the breaking of one of the *babiche* cords? He strained harder. The thongs were loosening; his

wrists were freer; with a cry that sent the mouse scurrying to the floor he doubled himself half erect, and fought like a madman. Five minutes later and he was free.

He staggered to his feet, and looked at his wrists. They were torn and bleeding. His second thought was of Corporal Carr—and a weapon. The man-hunter had taken the precaution to empty the chambers of Falkner's revolver and rifle and throw his cartridges out in the snow. But his skinning-knife was still in its sheath and belt, and he buckled it about his waist. He had no thought of killing Carr, though he hated the man almost to the point of murder. But his lips set in a grim smile as he thought of what he *would* do.

He knew that when Carr returned he would not enter at once into the cabin. He was the sort of man who would never take an unnecessary chance. He would go first to the little window—and look in. Falkner turned the lamp-wick lower, and placed the lamp on the table directly between the window and the bunk. Then he rolled his blankets into something like a human form, and went to the window to see the effect. The bunk was in deep shadow. From the window Corporal Carr could not see beyond the lamp. Then Falkner waited, out of range of the window, and close to the door.

It was not long before he heard something above the wailing of the storm. It was the whine of a dog, and he knew that a moment later the Corporal's ghostly face was peering in at the window. Then there came the sudden, swift opening of the door, and Carr sprang in like a cat, his hand on the butt of his revolver, still obeying that first governing law of his merciless life—caution. Falkner was so near that he could reach out and touch Carr, and in an instant he was at his enemy's throat. Not a cry fell from Carr's lips. There was death in the terrible grip of Falkner's hands, and like one whose neck had been broken Carr sank to the floor. Falkner's grip tightened, and he did not loosen it until Carr was black in the face and his jaw fell open. Then Falkner bound him hand and foot with the *babiche* thongs, and dragged him to the bunk.



He examined the pocket carefully....  
"I wouldn't want to lose you," he chuckled

Through the open door one of the sledge-dogs had thrust his head and shoulders. It was a Barracks team, accustomed to warmth and shelter, and Falkner had no difficulty in getting the leader and his three mates inside. To make friends with them he fed them chunks of raw caribou meat, and when Carr opened his eyes he was busy packing. He laughed joyously when he saw that the man-hunter had regained consciousness, and was staring at him with evident malice.

"Hello, Carr," he greeted affably. "Feeling better? Tables sort of turned, aint they?"

Carr made no answer. His white lips were set like thin bands of steel.

"I'm getting ready to leave you," Falkner explained, as he rolled up a blanket and shoved it into his rubber pack-pouch. "And you're going to stay here—until spring. Do you get onto that? You've *got* to stay. I'm going to leave you marooned, so to speak. You couldn't travel a hundred yards out there without snowshoes, and I'm goin' to take your snowshoes. And I'm goin' to take your guns, and burn your pack, your coat, mittens, cap an' moccasins. Catch on? I'm not goin' to kill you, and I'm goin' to leave you enough grub to last until spring, but you wont dare risk yourself very far out in the cold and snow. If you do, you'll freeze off your tootsies,

and make your lungs sick. Don't you feel sort of pleasant—you—you—devil!"

Six hours later Falkner stood outside the cabin. The dogs were in their traces, and the sledge was packed. The storm had blown itself out, and a warmer temperature had followed in the path of the blizzard. He wore his coat now, and gently he felt of the bulging pocket, and laughed joyously as he faced the South.

"It's goin' to be a long hike, you little cuss," he said softly. "It's goin' to be a darned long hike. But we'll make it. Yes-sir, we'll make it. And wont they be s'prised when we fall in on 'em, six months ahead of time?"

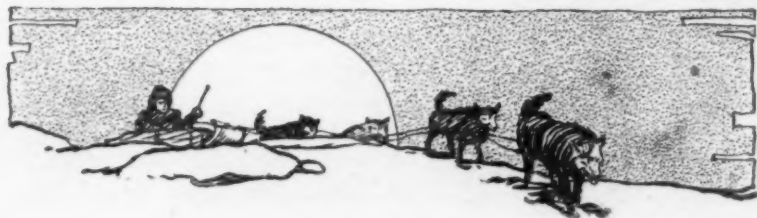
He examined the pocket carefully, making sure that he had buttoned down the flap.

"I wouldn't want to lose you," he chuckled. "Next to her, an' the kid, I wouldn't want to lose you!"

Then, slowly, a strange smile passed over his face, and he gazed questioningly for a moment at the pocket which he held in his hand.

"You nervy little cuss!" he grinned. "I wonder if you're a girl mouse, an' if we're goin' to have a fam'ly on the way home! An'—an'—what the dickens do you feed baby mice?"

He lowered the pocket, and with a sharp command to the waiting dogs turned his face into the South.





# An Uplifter

62 IDA M.  
EVANS

**W**HEN Abraham B. Reutzer, aged sixty-seven, informed the employees of the Reutzer Wholesale Millinery House that his son Joseph—his *only* son—had graduated from Princeton, and would be along in a week or so to take over the active management of the ten stories of folks and fashions that the old man had accumulated in the preceding third of a century, apprehension fluttered from the plate glass front doors to the glazed glass skylights.

"Durn it," said Mike, who had run the freight elevator for twelve years, "just as you get used to a place, something happens. I aint got nothing against the young fellow, but I never did like a chap that would wear a black alpaca suit from choice."

Mike voiced the general sentiment. No one had anything against young Reutzer, except that he was too thin for his height, and too tall for his narrow frame—that his alpaca suits were the

ILLUSTRATED  
BY  
WALLACE  
MORGAN

cheapest made, and that he was balder than is seemly for a young man. His forehead was protuberant and very white; his nose was long and down-curved; his chin was square, frightfully square; he wore spectacles, and his large blue eyes were always very wide open, as though in a continual state of wonder at the world and its people.

He arrived at the wholesale house at eight A. M. Monday morning. By noon, everyone, from Archkins, the credit man, to Simmy, who got two-fifty a week for carrying bundles to the freight chute, knew that Joseph Reutzer took to the betterment of his fellow creatures as a hungry dog takes to a plate of fricasseed chicken.

Social settlement work was his favorite topic of conversation. The uplift of humanity was his only thought. The tall building in Chicago's congested loop, with its five hundred or more employees who passed Parisian mandates on from

New York to the fashion-greedy middle-West, he beamed upon as a gold-digger beams upon a gully cluttered with nuggets.

Without a second's delay he went to work. He hardly took time to eat; he skipped some of his meals. Melbrow, the corpulent, purple-jowled cashier, scornfully said that a fellow whose main food was wheat-shreds, and whose favorite drink was weak Ceylon, might as well skip 'em all. His stomach would never know the difference.

No criticism could get through the eager conscientiousness that enwrapped young Reutzer. First he installed a ventilating system that was the latest and most costly on the market. Then he enlarged the work-rooms, put in broader tables for the girls, enlarged the coat-rooms; he put in footrests, a lunch-room in the basement where food was sold at cost, a library off the trimming room, a rest-room. Also he raised wages lavishly, distributed truckloads of free tickets to concerts and instructive lectures, and bowed to every employee whom he passed in the streets. In fact, lest he slight some worthy girl or man whose face was not familiar to him, Joseph bowed to everyone in town.

All of this was very praiseworthy, and his father did not cavil, even though the season's profits were considerably lopped. Reutzer Senior reflected comfortably that philanthropy was no more expensive and far easier on the paternal nerves than motor-racing or poker. The old man knew plenty of fathers who would be tickled out of their hides to have a comfortable, humanity-helping son.

But Joseph's zeal outran his discretion. From improving the employees *en masse*, he began to individualize.

Now of course the world needs philanthropists quite as much as it needs overshoes in slushy weather. But no one loves an overshoe. It is a clumsy, detested article, even when most needed.

Presently, in the salesrooms, also in the trimming, packing and shipping rooms, young Reutzer's long, serious white face aroused as ardent an enthusiasm as that inspired by a goat in a lettuce bed.

Barney Cormack of the blocking de-

partment got nineteen dollars a week. In politics, Barney would have been a Populist if that respectable party hadn't been on the hospital list when he cast his first vote. So he became a Democrat with a tender feeling for Debs. If Barney had been four inches shorter and fifty pounds heavier, men who decorate tankards and steins with twinkling-eyed, cowed drinkers would have lassoed him for a model.

Such being his disposition, he neither knew nor cared that his employer's son was standing behind him in the elevator one noon when he boastfully showed two pink tickets black-lettered "John Drew," and black-numbered \$2.00.

Barney did not take pleasantly the instant advice that nineteen per was in line with cheaper drama, and that thrift in one's youth was needed to insure comfort in one's old age.

"Got a right to spend my money as I please," he muttered. "I work hard enough for it."

"No," Joseph Reutzer corrected kindly,—Joseph was always kindly no matter how displeased he might be,—"no one has a right to say that. I might say that I have a right to spend my money for yachts and racing cars. But happily I am better informed. I have the *privilege* of spending it for others."

Barney sprinted out of the elevator as it touched the main floor. His round, good-natured face was twisted in a grimace that might have meant several emotions. There was one it did not mean—as the chuckling men behind him were well aware—and that was appreciative humility.

Two days later young Reutzer found Anna Pasmansky crying in the seldom-visited end of a side corridor.

Joseph paused. He could have walked past and pretended that he hadn't seen her. But that wasn't Joseph's way. He paused, and kindly, very kindly, wanted to know the reason of the tears that were trickling down Anna's plump pink cheeks, and dropping in rapid succession to Anna's green cotton voile waist.

Anna was crying for twelve or fourteen reasons.

First, she had reached home the night before at four-thirty in the morning. It had been nearly two A. M. when she left a

dance hall on the West Side, under the genial escort of Barney Cormack. Any parent with a grain of common sense would know that street-cars are unreliable at that time of night. Anna's father hadn't a grain of common sense in his red-thatched head—or so it seemed. He bawled from an upstairs window of the Pasmansky home, regardless of listening neighbors, that the next time any scoundrel brought his youngest daughter home at that hour of the night, said scoundrel would have his scoundrelly features smeared over the North Side.

Anna wasn't terribly frightened; nor was Barney, having heard the threat at regular intervals for over a year. But she was "peevish." She had intended to remain in bed the next morning, regardless of waiting hats, and snooze restfully till noon. Since her father was staying at home with a grouch and the influenza, she irritably came to the conclusion that more real rest could be found in the Reutzer trimming room than in the Pasmansky abode.

The feeling of irritation with which she commenced the day was not allayed at the breakfast table. Her younger brother accused her of "swiping" his best stick-pin. Her mother told her tartly that the laundress complained about so many white waists, and since good laundresses are not to be found on every curbstone, Anna could retrench. Her father glared remembrance of past amenities.

When one has partaken of chop suey, ginger ale, ice cream and chocolate



"How much do you get a week?" Joseph asked pityingly.

creams at three A. M., oatmeal and fried potatoes three hours later don't arouse energy. Anna was sleepy. Her movements were languid. A cup of coffee slipped from her listless fingers, and splashed brown her clean pink linene waist. Her only other clean waist, except those sacred to social events, was a somewhat faded green voile; it wasn't becoming with its washed-out hue, but she crossly decided that it was good enough for work.

On the way downtown, other sad incidents hurried to get in her path. An ice-wagon collapsed in front of the street car, and she had to walk four blocks to another line. The second conductor was sassy. Anna's aching head rebelled at the stuffy interior of the car, but he rudely ordered her in so other folks could get on the platform. And she remembered,

with belated anger, Barney's candid tip the night before that her face, though pretty, was too round and squashy for flatly parted hair.

Before she got from the door of the trimming room to her own table, a snippy forewoman had flung two frilly Tam O'Shanters at her, Tam O'Shanters that Anna had complacently trimmed the preceding afternoon.

"For the love of heaven, perk up those bows on the side! Anyone'd think an apprentice from Milwaukee Avenue plastered 'em on with a bottle of glue!"

Anna cut the offending bows off, and jabbed a needle at them with weary viciousness. Then she let out a shriek of anguish. For her thimble was old and decrepit. She had been intending for a week to get a new one. Without warning, it had given way; the long needle went through, slid under the nail of Anna's middle finger, and plowed a bloody way out near the first knuckle.

Melissa, on the other side of the table, trimmed the hats while Anna soaked the finger in hot water and then bandaged it. After an interminable time, noon came.

Wandering appetiteless past a luscious cafeteria table, Anna experimentally picked up a dish of lobster salad—canned lobster—some Southern hash, two dill pickles, two sweet potatoes, a doughnut, some Chili sauce, spaghetti, lemon cream pie, and two hot biscuits,

Afterward she sought a department store, to buy a belt and a pair of gloves. But before she got to either article, she saw a counter where a mob of women were fighting over a tray of lace collars marked down from four dollars to three seventy-five. Anna got one away from an athlete in tan broadcloth, and emptied her purse to pay for it. Then she used up twenty minutes taking it to the Return Desk and getting her money back. By that time it was too late to buy the gloves and belt, so she went back to work.

Her head felt like a combination of an ulcerated tooth and a soft corn. Her



"Any girl that'll take up with a long-legged, yellow-gilled, white-livered, bald-headed chromo, aint the girl I thought she was," he told her pointedly

finger was red-hot with pain. And the twenty-eight cents worth of cafeteria delectables was practicing a turkey trot in her stomach. She could not go home. Her father would be stretched on the davenport in the back parlor, rampant with quinine and whisky, and ready to re-hash last night's arguments on filial decorum.

Shortly after two o'clock she dropped her spool of white thread under the table. As she reached for it, her black panama skirt caught on an unsuspected nail, and a long tear resulted in the front side gore.

That was the last straw—not that the skirt was worth much; she was about ready to discard it. But cumulative woe had reached the psychological point when only tears, unrestrained tears, would bring relief. She slammed down the ecru Leghorn that she was covering with navy blue apple blossoms, sought the dim end of the side corridor—for the rest-room was not secluded enough—and began to enjoy her troubles.

At Joseph's kindly query, she raised red eyelids in rage. She would have liked to take him by his long, drooping nose and drop him out the nearest window to the ground eight stories below. The crunch of his bones would be an agreeable chord in the dirge of life.

"Nothing's the matter," she snapped.

"Tell me your trouble," Joseph insisted very kindly.

Anna quit crying. The corners of her mouth twitched slightly—not with grief.

"No,"—sadly. "I—I can't."

Joseph looked at the faded waist and the torn skirt. The bandage on her punctured finger had been white; now it was streaked darkly from the navy blossoms that she had been handling. Her face was tear-stained, and her pretty brown hair had partly tumbled from its usual braided posture. Taken altogether, she wasn't a picture of prosperous girlhood.

To the habitual philanthropist, poverty peers from every disheveled hair and every unmanicured finger-nail.

"How much do you get a week?" Joseph asked pityingly.

"Twelve dollars,"—mournfully.

"What does your father do? That is,"—hastily—"if he is living?"

"He works—on jobs," Anna explained vaguely. "He's been working on the new City Hall that was finished last month."

"Ah!" Joseph Reutzer thought he understood. "Not steady, I fancy. And have you many brothers and sisters?"

"Four sisters and five brothers," she confessed dolefully.

"Good gracious! I dare say you haven't much money left the day after pay-day."

"No," said Anna, gulping a sob.

Profound pity lit her employer's eyes.

"I'll see that you get three dollars more," he said, and got out a pencil to write her name.

Then, while Anna was dazedly thanking him, he walked away. His long white face bore an expression of tense thought.

Anna wiped her eyes, and gigglingly returned to work. On the way she met Barney, for the first time since four-thirty that morning. No one seeing Barney in his crumpled, collarless blue percale shirt and baggy-kneed pants would have guessed that he was the same natty, pink-shaven, brushed, pressed, patent-leathered, rosewater-scented chap who had jauntily piloted Anna at the head of the grand march the previous evening.

"'Lo, An," grunted Barney. "Old man still rampagin' this morning?"

"Yes,"—with disgust. "Anyone'd think I was twelve years old. Barney, what do you think the boss said to me just now?"

"Don't tell me anything that chump said," Barney snorted. "It gives me a pain just to look at the back of his bald head. Want to go to a moving picture show to-night?"

"Sure—if pa aint home."

Barney whistled on to the blocking room, and Anna, much refreshed in spirit, tackled the Leghorns again. A smile glimmered over her face as she went over her conversation with young Reutzer. With difficulty she repressed a laugh.

Not that she had strayed from veracity. Every word was true. Her father worked on "jobs." But not for the two-fifty a day, and a lay-off every other week, that young Reutzer imagined. Rudolph Pasmansky was a contractor. It would have been blatantly ungrateful

to Providence to be anything else when he had two cousins and a brother-in-law in the city council. Twice the state legislature had almost been disrupted over the rich "jobs" that the aldermanic kin had handed to Anna's father.

It was perfectly true that she had the amount of brothers and sisters which she claimed. But the majority were married—and had the wherewithal to buy fresh eggs in January and strawberries in March.

It was also quite true that she had only a few nickels and a quarter or so left the day after pay-day—when she had settled her debts. Anna and debt were always in close communion.

Several motives took Anna down town each day to work: only part of them were within the comprehension of a philanthropist. Primarily she worked because she was only two generations removed from the bent, brown, hard-muscled peasant women of middle Europe who fold their gnarled hands only with their last heart beat. Instinct for work was bred in her bone.

Then, her father considered three or four dollars plenty for a girl to spend in one week. It was a triumph to flaunt twelve before him. And home was dull; she liked the exhilaration of mingling with downtown workers.

But if either of her parents had suggested that she pay a portion of the twelve dollars for her room and board, Anna would have been aghast. In less time than it takes to write it, she would have jammed her clothes and silver-plated toilet articles in a suit-case, and fled indignantly to the aloofness of a hall bedroom, there to pout until her mother arrived and tearfully bribed her to come back home.

That night Anna did not go to the moving picture show. Her father dragged his Morris chair to a spot that commanded a full view of the front door, and angrily dared her to go out.

So she resigned herself to necessity, and embraced the enforced leisure to overhaul her wardrobe and personal appearance. She sewed fresh stays in the lace collar of a waist that her mother had ironed that afternoon for her, and gaily got out a tailored blue cheviot

skirt. Then she washed her hair, with plenty of soda in the last rinsing water, lengthily manicured her finger-nails, rubbed cold cream on a chapped chin, and went to bed two hours earlier than had happened in the last year.

In the morning, Joseph Reutzer was passing as Anna punched the timeclock. Owing to the unusual amount of sleep, the manipulations of the evening before, the beneficent effect of a dazzling white shirtwaist and a snug-fitting skirt, Anna radiated happiness and well-being. Her hair glistened fluffily. Her round face was smilingly pink and white.

Joseph Reutzer looked, paused, and resolved. The man in him, not the philanthropist, noted that she was plumply fashioned. No lacing could give her full form the straight, fleshless effect that style demanded.

Joseph had long ago planned to select his helpmeet from the lower classes. Otherwise he would have been inconsistent in his life-work. This morning, in the eighth part of a second, he decided that Anna Pasmansky filled the bill. She had every qualification necessary. She was young, healthy, energetic, poor, industrious and clean. It gladdened his heart to see how clean she had become overnight; the three dollar raise had evidently cheered her. Such quick response to kindness showed her capabilities.

Immediately he asked her if she wouldn't like to attend a lecture that evening on the West Side, concerning the Amelioration and Alleviation of the Future Mothers of the Race.

It happened that the Paperhangers' Union was presenting an amateur minstrel performance that evening. Barney had had tickets for three weeks, and Anna had already planned an exit by way of the alley if the Morris chair made the front door impregnable.

So, demurely and regretfully, she told young Reutzer that she was sorry. Some other time—

"Sunday afternoon at Orchestra Hall there is to be a most edifying and instructive address on the Great Need of Felicitous Relations Between the Oppressed and the Oppressors," said Joseph instantly.

Anna involuntarily grimaced. Jo-



She thrilled with pride when she strolled away with young Reutzer before the gaping, envious eyes of Melissa and two other girls.

seph's research into the habits and customs of the working class had not yet informed him of the fact that Sunday afternoons are devoted to the dress parade in Lincoln Park. And Anna had a new pale blue pongee.

"I'm—busy most all day Sundays," faltered Anna.

Joseph regarded her with infinite pity. He had a perfectly clear vision of her washing dishes, tending a sick mother maybe, washing the faces of five little brothers.

"Next Tuesday evening a noted

speaker will talk in Steinway Hall on the Higher Cost of Living, and the Indirect Ratio of the Willow Plume to Crime."

There was no excuse within reach. So Anna agreed to accompany him there. But when he asked where he should call for her, she blushed. A view of the heavy Wilton velvet rug that lay on the highly polished floor of the Pasmansky reception hall might lead him to infer—well, that the three dollars had been obtained under false pretenses.

She made it plain that she would rather meet him downtown. He pityingly

surmised that she was ashamed of her poor home, and tactfully fell in with her wish.

And afterward, when he said good-night to Anna in front of a squat, shabby little cottage on a dimly lighted street in a part of town that he was quite unfamiliar with, he had no means of knowing that she lingered in the shadow of its porch until he had turned the corner, and that she then scooted around the opposite corner to a pretentious brick house. Anna was a girl of resource.

Two weeks later the girls in the trimming room were speaking as respectfully to Anna as they spoke to the forewoman. Anna sniffed the incense hungrily, and avoided Barney's sullen gaze. But she couldn't help meeting him once in a while.

"Any girl that'll take up with a long-legged, yellow-gilled, white-livered, bald-headed chromo aint the girl I thought she was," he told her pointedly.

"Anybody ask for your opinion?" Anna demanded.

"I s'pose you think you're due to eat off a gold plate the rest of your life, and be a glad young plutocrat," he sneered. "I'll bet he don't give you anything to eat but peanut butter and shredded corn-husks."

"You mind your own business, Mr. Cormack, and you'll slide through the world a lot slicker," flashed Anna.

It was ten minutes after six. She was standing in the glass-encased lobby of the main floor, buttoning her gloves, and waiting for Joseph, who was holding a low-toned conversation with his father on the other side the swinging doors. Anna didn't like the chilly looks Reutzer Senior gave her whenever she glanced around to see if Joseph was coming, and she knew she wouldn't like the unsatisfying dinner which Joseph would presently order for her in an uninviting restaurant. And the meeting which they were to attend, for the Uplifting and Enlightenment of Seamstresses, would not be a jovial entertainment.

Also, when young Reutzer bade her good-night—still in front of the squat little cottage—she never had the faintest desire to keep her round pink cheek halfway between his left clavicle and watch-

fob until a sound that was half a roar and half a screech announced that her father had come downstairs in his pajamas and was waiting to welcome her into the house—as had been her nightly custom with Barney.

But Anna came from a knee-bowing class. Her great-grandfather had deemed it an honor to curry a lord's horse. So she calmly watched Barney, with melancholy-drooped shoulders, slouch away under the sputtering arc-lights of dusk-swathed Wabash Avenue. And she thrilled with pride when she finally strolled away with young Reutzer before the gaping, envious eyes of Melissa and two other girls.

That morning Anna's mother had remarked to Anna's oldest married sister, Linda, that Anna was getting "real sensible." She wasn't so finicky about her clothes, and went out every evening in the same dress that she wore to work.

"That's awful queer," said Linda. "Maybe she's coming down with a fever."

"I wonder," said Anna's mother worriedly. "And she's in awful early at night; sometimes by half-past ten. Maybe she's just scared of your father. But to be on the safe side I'll give her some camomile tea to-morrow."

That evening Joseph rapturously and Anna yawningly listened from seven forty-five till eleven-twenty while an elongated, hipless spinster with henna-dyed hair talked, screamed, gesticulated and elocuted concerning the needs and habits of the seamstress—that is, Anna yawned until ten o'clock; then she went to sleep.

Joseph was troubled when he found out the lateness of the hour. It was an hour's ride to Anna's home, and he reflected uncomfortably that the poor girl had to get up execrably early in the morning. Anna also was troubled until she remembered that it was Wednesday night, and her father's favorite lodge would be in session until two A. M. Then she was merely cross. Conversing with Joseph Reutzer while she waited for a tardy street-car was not so exciting as—as jabbering to Barney Cormack under the same circumstances.

Between the lecture hall on the West Side and Anna's abode out north, the

street railway company had woven a devious way. Five transfers were necessary. Twenty minutes dragged by before the first car came along. After they got on, it stopped several times while the motorman tinkered with the trolley. Two of the cross lines ran cars only every thirty minutes. Anna and Joseph arrived at each intersection just as a yellow-lighted car was streaking away.

"This is most unfortunate," said Joseph at the second wait. "I almost wish that our esteemed speaker had slightly shortened her talk."

With eyes narrowed in umbrage, Anna looked at him. But she was too sleepy to reproach him. Silence hung between them like a blanket of gloom, until they stepped off the last car, and from the clock in a cathedral near by came three loud, accusing chimes.

"Oh!" squeaked Anna in dismay.

"It really *is* late," Joseph murmured contritely.

As they turned the corner, there came a sound that was a commingling of a roar and a screech. Without parley or ado, Anna wriggled her arm from Joseph's hold, and fled back in the direction from which they had come. Her married sister, Linda, lived that way.

Before Joseph could do more than stare wonderingly after her flying form, an avalanche of wrath and mighty muscle was upon him. His blinking eyes glimpsed barely some green-striped pajamas and a red-thatched head. Two powerful hands—Rudolph Pasmansky was an iron-worker before he became a contractor—clenched about his thin white neck. A huge foot shot up and landed in Joseph's frail stomach. A hurricane of roared profanity outraged Joseph's auditory nerves.

"I told you, Barney Cormack, that the next time you kept my daughter out till an indecent hour of night, I'd break every bone in your whole worthless body! Take that, you scoundrel! And *that*, you villain! And *THAT*, you blackguard!"

"Let me explain," gasped Joseph. "I assure you—"

"Shut up!—or I'll push you down that manhole and clamp the lid on!"

"Hel—lp!" shrilled Joseph. "Police!"

"Police!" snorted Pasmansky. "I'll

police you! You contemptible, lowdown, black-hearted reprobate!"

Each epithet was punctuated with the blow of a hard fist.

Around the corner a policeman came running. Pasmansky shoved Joseph, whose protests were feebly expiring, at him.

"What's the matter, Mr. Pasmansky?" stuttered the bluecoat. "Was he trying to hold you up?"

"Worse!" thundered Anna's father. "He was trying to rob me! Take him to the station, Clancy, and tell the inspector if he lets him out on bail, I'll have him put off the force."

He gave young Reutzer a parting kick—and wheat shreds and pale tea do not build anatomy that can stand such violent contact with No. 12 shoes.

Then Rudolph Pasmansky went home, assumed that his daughter had retreated to her bed, and slept the sleep of the satisfied.

In the morning, Anna waited till nearly noon before she sent Linda's seven-year old son over to reconnoiter. When assured that her father had departed for his office, she scooted home.

"If you aint done it now!" upbraided her mother. "The way your pa mauled that poor Barney—"

"It wasn't Barney," giggle! Anna.

"Say, ma, I'm afraid I've lost my job."

"What of it?" placidly inquired Mrs. Pasmansky. "I wish you'd stay home a week or two and help me put up fruit."

The telephone tinkled, and Anna flew to answer it.

Her round pink and white face crinkled with mirth as she listened, and a soft staccato of giggles aroused her mother's interest.

"What you been doing now, Anna?" she demanded.

"Old man Reutzer fired Barney," laughed Anna, "and Barney thinks it's all my fault. Say, Ma, will you iron my lace waist so I can wear it to-night? Barney's got tickets for a show."

"Anna, you got to stay home to-night. Your pa'll be wild—"

"No, he wont," giggled Anna. "After he sees who he beat up last night, he'll feel so cheap, he wont say nothing. And he's got to get Barney a good job."

# The Shadow

by

JOHN A.  
MOROSO

Author of "Bonehead Tierney," etc.

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ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM OBERHARDT

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**O**VER a Bowery clothing store not far south of Cooper Union, where the streets tangle in gore strips and the buildings covering the odd pieces of land have many angles, hung this sign:

## FULL DRESS SUITS TO HIRE

From the station of the Third Avenue Elevated below Astor Place it could be read with the same astonishing ease that one reads the top headline in a yellow afternoon paper, for it was on a level with the station platform, and within the toss of the filmy wrapper from your penny-in-the-slot bit of chewing gum.

A man well advanced in middle age, with a rusty beard, was among the passengers waiting for the next uptown train. He read the obtrusive sign as if idly, staring at it with dull gray eyes.

It was a chill evening in autumn and during the rush hour. He had seen three trains pass packed with humanity. With the coming of each train he moved forward with the crowd and then refrained from joining the clawing, fighting men and women about him who tried to force their way into the already overcrowded cars.

A thin, shabby overcoat, fitting too tightly about his broad shoulders, gave silent testimony that it was an outcast

garment. His felt hat was battered by the weather and years until it was almost grotesque in its misshapeness. But if the patient stranger seemed a poor man because of his garb, there was something of dignity and superiority about his carriage that stamped him no beggar. The eyes under the dilapidated hat were full and intelligent. The nose was straight, high of bridge and finely curved at the nostrils.

At the opposite end of the platform a well dressed man, clean-shaven and with a singularly narrow face and head, also lingered as the trains came and went.

Suddenly, as a train drew up to the station, the shabby man made a deliberate false start for one of the iron gates, reached it, then bowed his head, turned about and worked his way through the crowd to the stairs leading to the sidewalk. He darted for the Bowery as fast as his legs could carry him.

The waiting passenger at the other end of the platform evidently had the eyes and the training of a falcon, for this ruse did not catch him napping. He darted from his end of the platform after the shabby gentleman.

As if measuring the speed and intelligence of his pursuer, the man with the rusty beard and old clothes did not lay out a long course for his flight. Once on the crowded Bowery sidewalk, he side-

stepped into the gloomy entrance of the clothing store beneath the sign announcing that dress suits might there be hired. In a few steps he was safely behind a great bale of clothing and out of the vision of those passing or loitering on the street.

The proprietor of the store hastened to him, half in fear that he was a thief or a hold-up man.

"What is it?" he demanded. Then, seeing that the stranger showed no sign of viciousness, he asked in half pleading tones whether he would buy or rent a



The proprietor of the store hastened to him, half in fear that he was a thief or a holdup man.

suit of clothes at a remarkably low price.

"I would like to look at your dress suit stock," said the stranger.

The shopkeeper stared at him, wondering whether he had just been turned out of the psychopathic ward of Bellevue.

"Don't you understand me?" asked the stranger. "I have the money. I want a good, fresh, well-fitting suit of evening clothes."

He drew a wallet from his pocket and opened it wide enough to let the proprietor of the place see that he had an abundance of cash.

"I have a beautiful suit that will fit you perfectly," exclaimed the clothier with enthusiasm. "Come this way, sir."

He pointed to a dark aisle between two long counters high-piled with clothing. At the end of the aisle was a little door. He opened it and lit a gas jet.

"This is the dressing room for gents," he said. "I'll bring you the suit."

While he was gone, the patron slipped out of the tiny room and peered over the mountain ridges of clothing toward the door and windows. The shadow that he seemed anxious to rid himself of was not to be seen.

On the return of the clothier, he removed his shabby garments with great deliberateness, as if intent on using all the time that he could without causing suspicion of the man with whom he was dealing.

The patron growled over many suits and finally selected one of really good material. The fit was excellent. From shelves filled with haberdashery and imitation gold, silver and pearl ornaments for men, the shopkeeper brought a white shirt with cuffs attached, studs, link buttons, a black tie, white kid gloves and finally a silk-lined overcoat and a soft, black hat. A pair of patent leather shoes was brought from a neighboring shoe store.

With his raiment entirely changed, the patron presented the appearance of a wealthy and distinguished gentleman. The beard that had looked rusty and shaggy with a setting of shabby clothes now looked distinctive. The man seemed more of an artist or philosopher than the creature of the crowd he had appeared to be less than an hour before.

"Call me a taxi," he ordered. "If there is none to be had in the neighborhood, use the telephone."

The storekeeper was now hurrying to obey his commands as if he had been his valet for many years.

The stranger asked for the bill, expressing a willingness to cover the whole outlay of garments with a deposit that would protect the clothier from any loss. He was counting out the money when a series of honks from the door informed him that the taxi had arrived.

"Your name, sir?" asked the clothier.

"Staples—C. Staples."

"Address, sir?"

"Never mind the address."

Night had fallen, and the Bowery lights were glaring when Staples slipped into the silk-lined overcoat and hurried across the pavement to the taxi.

"Uptown," was all that he said to the chauffeur.

## II

The taxi rolled along comfortably to Astor Place, where it changed its course west and made through Eighth Street to Fifth Avenue. At Forty-second Street the chauffeur called back to know just how far north his fare desired to go.

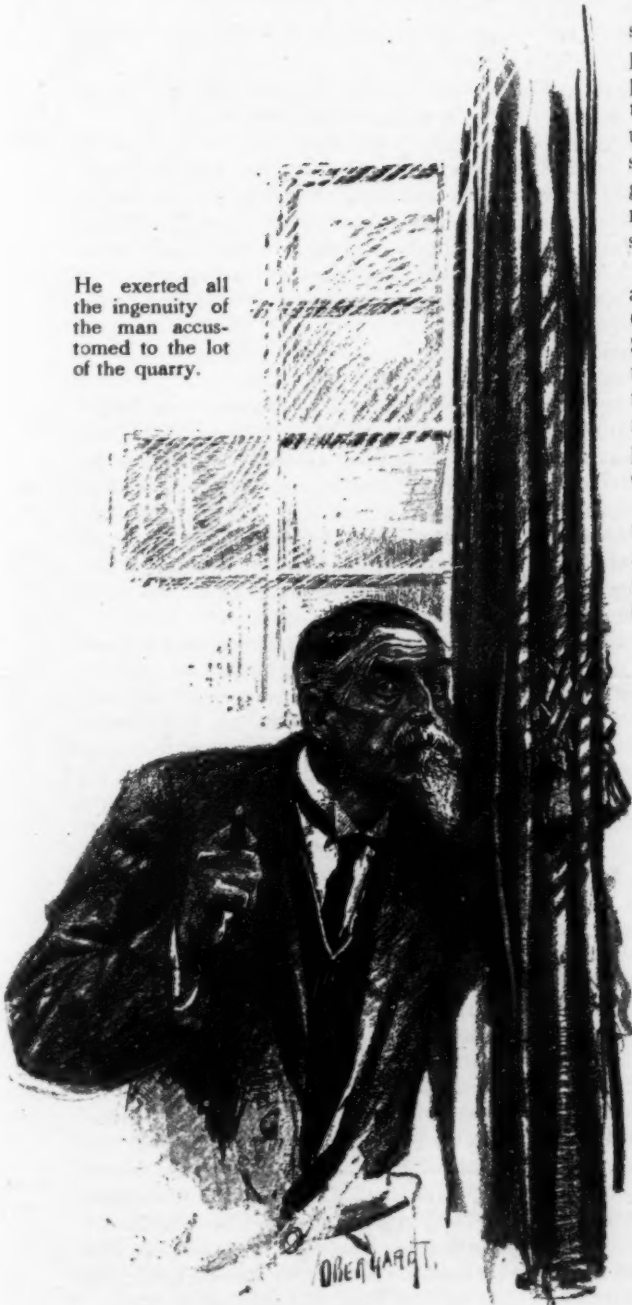
"West 125th Street," was the order.

On 125th Street—the Broadway of Harlem—Staples had the chauffeur pull up at a trunk and bag store. There he bought two large grips of the finest make. He had the chauffeur take these to an up-to-date outfitting establishment for men next door. In this second place he bought as complete a wardrobe as the two bags would hold, with the necessary toilet articles for the comfort of a man suddenly called off on a journey.

The little clock on the taxi was spinning around all the while, adding up a big bill, but the distinguished appearing Mr. Staples did not seem concerned, and the chauffeur, after a glimpse of the interior of his fare's wallet, was eminently satisfied.

Equipped finally to his satisfaction, Staples reentered the taxi with his well packed bags and ordered the chauffeur to take him to the 125th Street station of the New York Central. There he paid for

He exerted all the ingenuity of the man accustomed to the lot of the quarry.



the use of the machine, tipped the chauffeur, bowed pleasantly in parting and entered the little station under the elevated tracks of the railroad.

Staples bought a ticket to New Haven and had a porter lug his bags up the

stairs and deposit them on the platform for him. As the porter pocketed his tip and started for the street level, Staples picked up the bags and followed at a safe distance. He saw the man go down the stairs, and then moved over to the down track side of the island platform.

An incoming train pulled in, and he boarded it for the Grand Central depot at Forty-second Street. He had doubled on his tracks, and the purchase of the ticket to New Haven was solely for the purpose of sending his pursuer to that city should he come up with him to this point.

There was no mark for identification on his bags, and so he instructed a porter in the Grand Central station to deliver them at the Manhattan Hotel, to be held there for Mr. Markoff. He strolled out into Forty-second Street and turned into a hardware store. There he bought a pair of scissors and a leather-cased shaving outfit. He slipped these into his overcoat pockets and went to the hotel at the corner of Madison Avenue.

It was nine o'clock when he registered—Mr. Markoff, London. He was shown to one of the best single rooms with bath that the hostelry afforded. He turned the key in the lock and hung a towel over the knob, covering the keyhole made for the outside pass key. He glanced at the transom and saw that it was closed, and that it was covered with a dark green silk curtain. The shades of the windows he drew until they fitted snugly at the sills.

All of this done, Mr. Markoff proceeded to disrobe. Then he spread out his shaving apparatus and the newly bought scissors and, before his mirror, began to change his facial appearance. He trimmed the rusty beard until it was

close enough to use lather and razor. Within a half hour, all that was left of the rusty and tangled growth that had marked his appearance on the Bowery was a well pointed tuft on his chin and a short mustache. He combed his tousled hair and parted it in the middle. He drew back from the mirror and studied his appearance carefully. He was satisfied with the change.

At six o'clock in the morning, the night shift of the hotel's employees would be relieved. He might depart without any comment by anyone as to the absence of his beard. He picked up the telephone receiver and asked that he be called at five o'clock the next morning.

Markoff slept profoundly and was up and in his tub at five when the telephone bell tinkled. At six-thirty he was off with his two bags in a taxi to the Saint Felix in Fifth Avenue. There he engaged a suite consisting of reception room, bedroom and bath. He registered—thus:

Hubert Howard de Froissart, Paris.

The mustache and imperial, the natty, though ready-made suit, his distinguished air and suave manner well suited his foreign alias. He looked the Continental man of wealth and ease.

De Froissart went to breakfast, finding a window in the almost deserted dining room. After the fast of the evening before, he ate the well filled order heartily and with keen enjoyment. Spreading a copy of a morning paper before him, he glanced at the chief news items it afforded, laid it aside, lighted a cigarette and strolled to the lobby.

As he felt a growing sense of comfort and security, he whistled softly. In his mind he went over the intricate course of flight he had taken the night before and he assured himself that if, by any chance, the shadow he feared had picked him up after leaving the Bowery clothing store, he had dropped out in the race when he doubled at the Harlem station of the New York Central.

He was debating within himself the advisability of having his hair, mustache and goatee dyed by the hotel barber, when his attention was attracted by some one passing behind him. He turned quickly

but not in time to see the face of the man.

From the rear he saw that the man's head was singularly narrow.

De Froissart paled and choked down an exclamation of mingled fear and rage.

The shadow—if it was the shadow—turned into the writing room. De Froissart followed as rapidly as he could without attracting attention to himself.

There was no one in the writing room.

### III

In the course of three weeks de Froissart made many acquaintances in his hotel. The limited amount of baggage he had brought with him on his arrival was gradually increased by three trunks, all well stamped with foreign labels. One of these was packed with artist's materials.

He added another room to his suite and fitted it up as a studio.

The man with the narrow head did not reappear. Fearing that he was the shadow, De Froissart used many tricks to uncover him. He sat for hours in one spot watching for this one person. He would turn corridor corners and then double back on his tracks. He had spied through the keyholes of his suite on possible spies outside. He exerted all the ingenuity of the man accustomed to the lot of the quarry, but not one of his tricks availed. He became convinced that he was mistaken and that the man with the narrow head who had passed him in the hotel the day of his arrival was not the shadow. Feeling certain of this, after the most careful tests he could make, he proceeded to widen his circle of acquaintances.

De Froissart began to receive invitations to hotel affairs from idle and impressionable women and idle and bored men. His suavity of address, his rather dignified appearance, and his abundance of cash made him a good companion. His excellent English he explained by saying that he had been educated at Oxford.

The Parisian made no pretense of being a professional artist—that is, he would not paint or etch for money. He admitted that he was clever with his brush, but declared that he was not clever enough to attain achievement worth while as an artist.

When the first snow of winter began to fly, de Froissart was a well established dinner and after-dinner favorite in the life of the homeless-rich of New York, the people who live in public houses of gilt and marble. And of his many acquaintances, his first choice for friendship seemed to be John Sands, a reputed lumberman who had come out of the wilderness for a season in New York.

Mr. Sands, always well dressed, a rather portly, jovial person well advanced in the forties, with small, sparkling blue eyes and bushy mustaches touched with silver, was of the modern type of Westerner. While his timber holdings were very large, he explained, he used his profits to develop a gold mine it had been his good fortune to open up. Once in operation, his wealth would accumulate more swiftly than he might ever expect from timber lands or any other enterprise.

They made a jolly pair, de Froissart and Sands. Both were generous with their cash, and each thought the other at least a millionaire.

Sands gave several hours a day to business, having opened a suite of offices in the financial section downtown. Occasionally the directors and the counsel for his gold mining company would meet at the hotel in his extensive suite, such meetings ending with a dinner party. De Froissart and other guests of the hostelry gradually came to join these parties—affairs which were little short of sumptuous. Champagne and rare dishes and the very finest of imported cigars and vintages, all paid for by the company, made these feasts famous among the *bon vivants* of New York's hotel set.

As de Froissart became more intimate with Sands, he found reason to believe that the latter had come to the hotel with merely a grub stake and not with a million. But that he was rapidly accumulating a million was palpable. Sands always talked of the quick and large profits to be turned on the Curb with the listing of the stock of his company. The gullible rich held back for a few days and then a few acquaintances of the jovial Westerner opened their check books. Others followed their example, and the virulent fever of getting something for nothing began to spread.

De Froissart gave a sixty-day note for a large batch of the stock, and split a bottle of wine with Sands. They had become very chummy, and Sands would spend some of his time in the studio of his Parisian friend.

De Froissart, merely killing time with his oils and brushes, had made a sketch of his friend from the West.

"Finish it," suggested Sands. "I would like to take a real, good portrait back West with me. I'll pay you a thousand for it."

"A thousand dollars," repeated de Froissart, flicking the ashes from his cigarette. "It is nothing. Besides, I am not a real artist and it would be taking money under false pretenses. I could not do that, you know."

He smiled knowingly to the mining operator, who laughed.

"But you are an artist and a good one, old fellow," protested Sands. "I know a picture when I see it."

"Then too, art does not pay," mused de Froissart.

"Perhaps not as well as gold mining," admitted Sands.

"The kind of art we spell with a capital *A* certainly does not," de Froissart suggested with a smile.

He was sure that his jovial friend was ready for the approach he had long planned to make. He had something to sell, but not mining stock.

"Now engraving pays," he added.

"You have tried it?" asked Sands.

"Yes," said de Froissart slowly. "The really great art is engraving. In that field I am what you might call an artist."

"But is there money in it?" asked Sands.

De Froissart shrugged his shoulders.

"Now if there is anything in it and you need a backer in that field, I'll put up the money and go halves with you," the lumberman suggested. "I'm always willing to run a chance to pick up a piece of change."

De Froissart put down his brush and pallet.

"If I felt that I could trust you," he said, looking Sands squarely in the eyes, "I would let you know just how much money there is in it."

"Oh, something big, eh?"

"Better than any great mine ever discovered, better than all the timber lands in this rich country, better even than the treasury of the United States."

He spoke seriously and with intense enthusiasm.

"You must be dreaming, old fellow," said the lumberman.

"You say you would be willing to run a chance with me?" asked de Froissart.

"Sure—go ahead; tell it. I'll keep my mouth shut."

Sands had scented something that hinted of crookedness. He was not averse.

De Froissart reached into his velveteen jacket and pulled out a wallet, opening it. He displayed ten crisp bank-notes. Five were fifty-dollar bills and five were hundred-dollar bills.

"How is that for engraving?" he asked as he spread them out before the lumberman.

Sands looked at them carefully.

"I'd say it was real money," he said.

"Pick out any one of them," suggested de Froissart with a smile.

"How will this do?" asked Sands, selecting a fifty-dollar note.

De Froissart nodded and went to the telephone, asking for the bar.

"Send up a quart of champagne, dry. And send up change for a fifty-dollar bill. I need some small money. Yes, this is Monsieur de Froissart."

"Now," he said, turning to Sands as he hung up the receiver. "We shall see how well that certificate is engraved. I made it."

"You?"

"Yes."

"And you're running a chance like that in this hotel—where you're stopping?"

"There is no chance."

"But you say it is counterfeit."

"Not in the ordinary way."

"How do you do it?"

"By color photography," de Froissart replied. "I began by making photographic negatives on silver and then engraving into the silver a plate from which we could print. I advanced and can now print from the color negatives direct just as a print is taken from an ordinary camera negative. There is no imitation or counterfeit. It is simply a matter of reproduction. I can turn out five thousand dollars an hour."

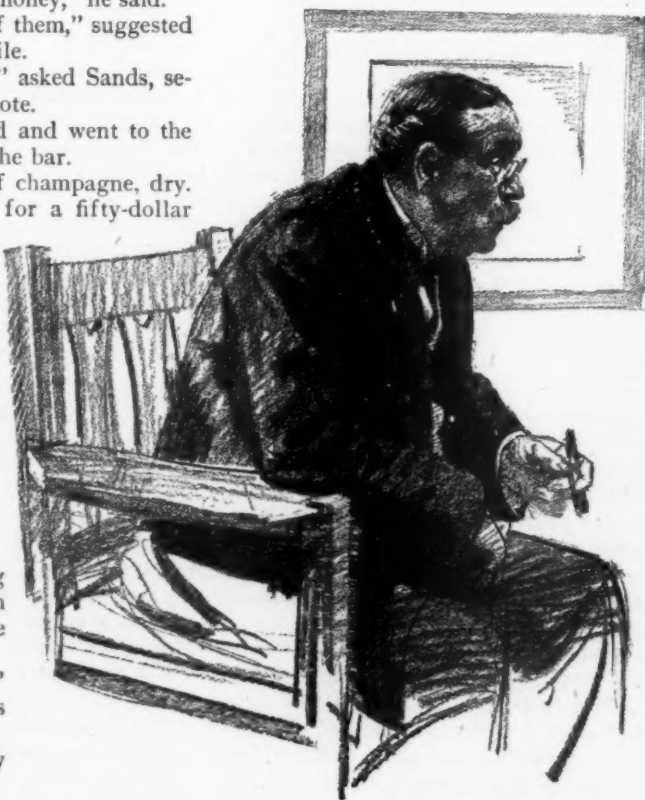
The little, cupidous eyes of Sands were sparkling like chip diamonds.

"Can I see you do it?" he asked.

"Surely," de Froissart replied. "If you are satisfied, I will sell you the secret and the plant for \$100,000. I am tired of the game."

#### IV

"Well, Beresford, is the way clear?"  
"Everything is all fixed now, sir."



"I'm always willing to run a chance to pick up a piece of change," suggested the lumberman.

The occupant of room No. 1218 in the great Fifth Avenue hostelry who had addressed his companion as Beresford sighed with relief.

"I shall be glad to get out," he said.

His long and thin face was pale. "Playing sick has made me feel very far from well, and I miss my exercise. I am glad that we are to close up this case to-night."

"I shall be glad to be starting for the other side, sir," said Beresford.

"Well, I'm off," said the other. "I shall take the servants' stairs."

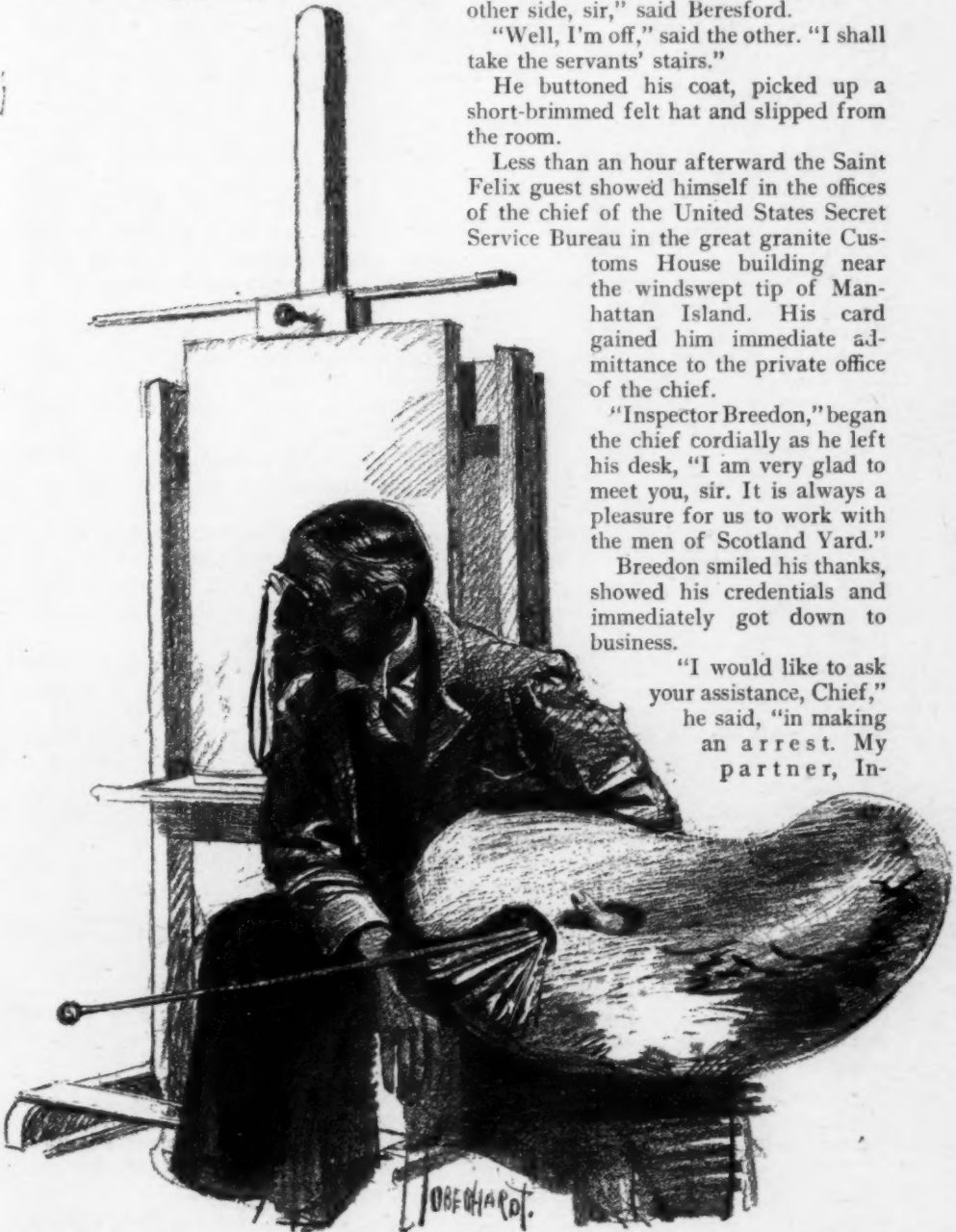
He buttoned his coat, picked up a short-brimmed felt hat and slipped from the room.

Less than an hour afterward the Saint Felix guest showed himself in the offices of the chief of the United States Secret Service Bureau in the great granite Customs House building near the windswept tip of Manhattan Island. His card gained him immediate admittance to the private office of the chief.

"Inspector Breedon," began the chief cordially as he left his desk, "I am very glad to meet you, sir. It is always a pleasure for us to work with the men of Scotland Yard."

Breedon smiled his thanks, showed his credentials and immediately got down to business.

"I would like to ask your assistance, Chief," he said, "in making an arrest. My partner, In-



"If I felt that I could trust you," he said, looking Sands squarely in the eyes, "I would tell you just how much money there is in it."

spector Alfred Beresford, and myself have trailed one William Ballington, a forger, across the ocean and—"

"Ah, we know the gentleman by reputation," exclaimed the Chief.

"We had a splendid case against him in London," said Breedon, "but just before the date set for trial our chief witness died."

"That was tough."

"Most annoying, I assure you. If the dear fellow had just hung on for a day or two longer—but there is no need of going into that, y'know. My chief inspector was very much upset over it and detailed me to follow Ballington and wait for him to begin operations again. I brought Beresford with me as an aide. Ballington is a remarkably brilliant crook, and my chief wants him put in some jail. It doesn't matter whether he is locked up here or in England or in Africa."

"Where is Ballington now?" asked the secret service man.

"Here, in New York. We followed him over. He hid himself in the East Side, taking a small apartment in a tenement. We uncovered him and picked him up disguised with beard and old clothes. Unfortunately he uncovered me as I was trailing him in the crowd on a Third Avenue elevated station. He darted to the street and took refuge in a clothing store. Beresford, who was with me, was not recognized as a pursuer and I turned the shadowing over to him. I felt sure that he would change his clothes and try to get away from the clothing store immediately; and so, while Beresford watched the place, I got a taxi and held it in readiness in case it was needed. It was very fortunate that I did this, for our man had a taxi ordered and in it fled to Harlem. He made some purchases and bought a ticket to New Haven. He then doubled on his tracks and instead of going to New Haven returned to the Grand Central Station in Forty-second Street. Beresford hung on and saw him register at the Manhattan Hotel."

"Ballington has the reputation of being more of a fox than a man," said the Secret Service head.

"He is really remarkable at disguises and at dodging," admitted Breedon.

"During the night he changed his appearance, and the next morning changed his name and his hotel. He is at the Saint Felix now, and is known there as de Froissart. The change he effected was so remarkable that Beresford called me on the telephone and asked me to look him over so that he would be sure that he was not trailing the wrong man. I went to the hotel and took a room. My quarry kept watching for me. I felt that he spotted me from behind and walked quickly to a writing room. There was an ornamental screen near the door. I passed behind this and as Ballington entered after me I dodged out behind him. Then I went to my room and I have remained there ever since, pretending to be ill. Beresford has been hobnobbing with his associates and has learned that to-night he will try a swindling trick on a rich Western man. Ballington is—er—what you call on this side a gun-man."

"If he wants a fight, we have plenty of good material in the fighting line to put against him," smiled the American grimly. "I shall let you have Clyde."

The secret service man pressed a pearl button, and Clyde, a splendidly built man of thirty, clean shaven and bright of eye, entered.

"Clyde was born on your side of the water, Inspector," said the American. "You may depend on him in any crisis."

"Whom are we after, Chief?" asked Clyde.

"Ballington, the English forger."

"Where is he?" Clyde asked.

"In a tenement on Fifth Street," Breedon informed him. "At least, he will be there to-night with the man he has selected to swindle."

"It is a crowded corner of New York," suggested the secret service chief. "I would suggest, Clyde, that you take Thompson and McAdam with you to watch the front and rear of the house."

## V

De Froissart and his lumberman friend decided to have dinner at the Café Boulevard, on Second Avenue.

The "Parisian" hired a fast runabout for the evening and took the wheel, heavily goggled.

When the runabout swung out of the line of vehicles in front of the St. Felix hotel, an awkward guest of the hostlery, standing in the entrance, carelessly dropped his hat and cane from his hand and began reaching for them.

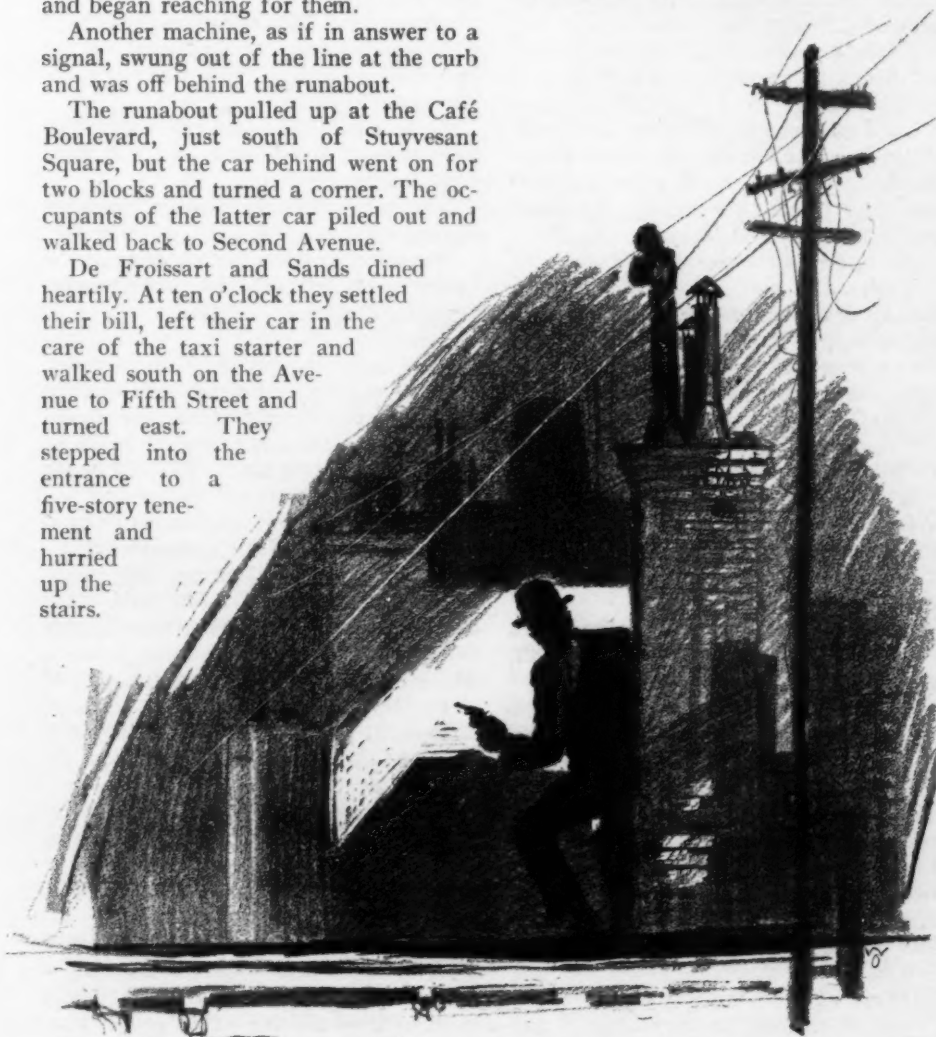
Another machine, as if in answer to a signal, swung out of the line at the curb and was off behind the runabout.

The runabout pulled up at the Café Boulevard, just south of Stuyvesant Square, but the car behind went on for two blocks and turned a corner. The occupants of the latter car piled out and walked back to Second Avenue.

De Froissart and Sands dined heartily. At ten o'clock they settled their bill, left their car in the care of the taxi starter and walked south on the Avenue to Fifth Street and turned east. They stepped into the entrance to a five-story tenement and hurried up the stairs.

to the cheaply ornate mantel in the room and slid back a yellow oak panel. It was his hiding place for his color camera and engraving plant.

He placed the camera on the table



In his right hand was a revolver with an ugly snout. "Come up," said the shadow.

Within his old quarters on the top floor, De Froissart locked the door and shot a heavy bolt.

He turned on an electric light, went

and then drew down the window shades, made of heavy black material. In the light of the one incandescent globe he fished out an iron standard holding an arc light and this he connected with a small dynamo. A wire was stretched to an empty chandelier socket and the electric connection was made.

With the turn of a bit of ebony, the room was made as brilliant as noon in the fields, the big arc light sputtering for a moment and then steadying in its glare.

"Give me one of your certificates," said de Froissart. "I shall reproduce it for you."

Sands gave him a genuine twenty-dollar note, the number of which he had jotted down on a bit of paper.

De Froissart was adjusting the certificate to a stand for the purpose of photographing it when, with a quick movement, he turned off the big light and reached for his hip pocket.

He had heard a footstep outside.

Under the one, dust-covered incandescent light in the room, the face of Sands showed chalky. De Froissart drew his revolver and straightened up as there came three distinct knocks upon the door.

"Well?" he inquired, finally.

"Telegram for Mr. Staples."

"Slip it under the door."

After a pause, there was a shuffling sound at the bottom of the door, but the yellow envelope did not appear within.

"Can't get it through," came from the voice in the hall.

"Leave it outside," said De Froissart.

"Fifty cents charges," sounded the voice outside.

"Take it back and I'll send for it in the morning," ordered de Froissart.

Sands had crawled under the bed in the room adjoining. De Froissart left the door and tip-toed through the flat to the rear, where there was a fire escape. He lifted the sash and looked below. He saw two figures in the small, bricked yard. He tip-toed back to the front and his keen eyes picked out two shadows across Fifth Street.

There was only one way out—the roof.

He returned to the fire escape. A narrow iron ladder connected it with the roof. He scaled the ladder and peered cautiously over the plastered rampart.

Seated on an empty box and facing him, was the shadow, the man with the

long, thin face and the narrow head. In his right hand was a revolver with an ugly snout.

"Come up," said the shadow.

De Froissart had slipped his weapon into his right overcoat pocket before taking the ladder. He climbed over the roof with empty hands. He sprawled on the graveled tin and as he did so drew his gun under cover.

As he scrambled to his knees a flare of light showed at his right side, and there came a grunting sound.

The counterfeiter's revolver carried a Maxim silencer.

Inspector Breedon felt the sting of the bullet in his left shoulder, none too far from his heart.

Zow!

Once more the cough of the sinister, silenced weapon, but this time it was the gun of the Scotland Yard man that spoke.

De Froissart's right arm dropped by his side, and his weapon clattered to the tin.

Breedon's revolver was leveled straight between the eyes of the counterfeiter.

"Don't try to pick it up, old chap," advised the Scotland Yard man. "We English are jolly well on to your Yankee inventions. Now, for instance, I use a Maxim myself."

He slipped a whistle between his teeth. The shrill call had hardly ended when two men showed over the scuttle in the roof.

"We've broken in the door, Inspector," said one of them, "and we have the other one."

The Secret Service man laughed as he stepped to the roof.

"Who do you think the other gentleman is?" he asked.

Breedon shook his head as he took a good hold on the arm of his prisoner.

"Why, it is old Jim Gilpin, one of the slickest confidence men in the West," Breedon was informed. "These two gentlemen were trying to do each other, I guess."

# A Light for William Gessler

BY JOHN BARTON OXFORD

[Author of "The Blot on His Scutcheon," etc.]



HE Gessler cottage nestled on the sloping hillside, just above the little harbor at Big Craggy Island. Far out at sea, as you stood in for Big Craggy, you could see its white sides and its red roof, crowned by the wide-throated chimney—such a chimney as they were wont to put on their houses a century ago.

At night, too, owing to the position of the cottage on the hillside, the light in the window was visible far out over the tumbling, troubled waters of that austere coast.

It was a very bright light, and it always shone from the wide window nearest the door. There it burned steadily, night after night, through calm and storm, winter and summer, good times and ill.

Many a man, running for the island in his punt, shaped his course by that light in the Gessler cottage, if he chanced to be still beating his way islandward when night overtook him.

They came to call it William Gessler's light—the islanders of Big Craggy, who were, for the most part, a simple, God-fearing folk, not untouched by the superstitions of those whose lives are spent within the sound of hissing surf booming over granite ledges.

The light had first been put in that window the night the island folk gave up the *Petrel* for lost. William Gessler and three other men from Big Craggy had been among the ill-fated schooner's crew, and when two months had gone past after the *Petrel* was already long overdue from the Banks, the families of the other three men gave them up for lost. It was God's will, they said; which was their particular way of expressing their resignation.

But Mrs. Gessler, William Gessler's widowed mother, put the light in the window and set her grim old lips.

"He aint lost," she declared. "William's alive somewheres. I know it; I got a feelin' that way; and when I have feelin's as strong as this one, I always believe in 'em and foller 'em. William aint lost, I tell ye. Maybe the rest of 'em is, but William *aint*. I'm a-goin' to set this light right here, for he's as likely to come back in the night as any time, and I want him to know there was one that looked for him, and kep' a light for him."

The other islanders shook their heads—all save Martha Semmes, whom William Gessler was to have married.

Martha Semmes, timid, pretty, almost appalled by that great love which was hers—and which she fancied was also William's—found a strange comfort in

that light in the awful days that succeeded the giving up of the *Petrel* by the bulk of the islanders. She found, too, a great and a comforting strength in the stubbornness of the grim old woman who kept that light burning each night.

"Do you really think there is any possibility of seeing him again—the least hope at all?" she asked at the first of it, half buoyed up and half frightened by what that light in the window seemed to imply.

"William's comin' back sometime, Marthy," Mrs. Gessler replied with that tight setting of her lips. "I know it; I feel it; that's enough for me. He's comin'—some time—don't ye ever have a doubt about that."

Martha Semmes was strangely soothed by that light. Just what it meant to her she could not at first have told. She only knew that when the dreary autumn evenings came and the surf boomed louder on the ledges and the wind howled dolefully up the hill from the sea, she would have broken down had it not been for that light in the window throwing its gleams far down the hillside and out over the black waters of the harbor.

She fell into a habit of walking every night over to the crest of the hill just above the Gessler cottage, and watching that light; and from that it was but a step to going down the hill and sitting each night with the grim old woman, who somehow knew just the right thing to say to Martha; who soothed her fears and bolstered up her waning courage, and kept alive in her the blessed hope that some day, some time, William Gessler was coming back to Big Craggy—laughing and joking and turning his eyes to her, just as he did that last morning he left the island to join the *Petrel* at Gros Ventre Bay.

They made a strange pair, hobnobbing there each night in the tiny kitchen of the Gessler cottage: Martha, young, pretty, flushed with the hope the older woman inspired; and Mrs. Gessler talking always of William, of his strength, his abilities as a fisherman, his courage, his gentleness. Never was there such another man as the William Gessler his mother talked about those long, dark evenings. Nor was there anything at all

wonderful in that, since we are always prone to see only the virtues of those who have left us.

All that year the light burned each night—all the next year. Somehow Mrs. Gessler in those nightly talks had thoroughly imbued Martha with her own spirit of hope and trust. A third year went by, and a fourth.

Mrs. Gessler was forced to support herself by doing what odd jobs she could for the summer people who were beginning to flock to the quiet of Big Craggy. Martha, being alone in the world, with neither father nor mother, managed very well with the dressmaking she did for the island women.

Yet, despite all of her buoyant hope, Martha Semmes began to lose much of her fresh prettiness; she began to look worn and faded and prematurely old. Sometimes she found it necessary to sew very hard all day to keep from screaming. What she really lived for was to go to the hill each night, see that light burning in the window, and partake, as in an orgy, of the comfort Mrs. Gessler's stubborn hope was sure to provide.

And so seven years went past.

One dreary, foggy March night, Mrs. Gessler sat alone in the cottage, mending a mackerel seine, for she had found she could pick up quite a little, mending the seines of the island off-shore fishermen.

Martha, who had come as usual that evening and tarried in the cottage kitchen for a while, had long since gone back to her own little cottage farther back from the harbor. The clock on the mantel above the stove struck eleven, but still Mrs. Gessler worked away at the seine, her fingers moving back and forth, back and forth, as she wove the mesh of new line and deftly tied the knots.

Like all foggy nights, it was very still. Even the sound of the surf on the ledges had died to a low, sleepy murmur.

It was a stillness in which every sound became magnified. The ticking of the clock seemed obtrusively loud; the snapping of the wood in the stove now and again made her start uneasily.

It was, therefore, no wonder that she caught the sound of heavy and none too

steady footsteps coming along the hill path towards the cottage. She got up to assure herself the door was securely bolted; and then, before she could resume her seat before the seine, there was a thunderous rap on the door.

Mrs. Gessler felt her heart jump.

"Who's there?" she called at length.

"Me," said a voice from the foggy darkness without.

With a choking cry Mrs. Gessler sprang up, scattering twine in every direction and overturning the frame on which the seine was stretched.

"William!" she fairly shouted, and flung wide the door.

Outside on the step was a dim figure. She threw her arms about it and dragged it into the room.

"William! William!" she was crying hysterically, her voice trembling and her whole frame shaken as with a chill.

"I knew you'd come back! I knew it!" she cried. "I stuck it out! I told 'em so, no matter how much they laughed at me or pitied me. I knew you'd come back! You're hungry, and you're cold. I'm goin' to get you some supper right off."

Then she had her first good look at the man she had drawn indoors. It was not exactly the William she had expected. The man's features were coarse and bloated. A week's growth of stubbly beard in nowise enhanced his appearance. His clothes were frayed and tattered. His hands were unclean. For the first time she became aware of the sickening odor of cheap, mainland rum about him.

"I—I aint hungry," he said thickly and with an effort.

She plucked, now almost timidly, at his sleeve.

"Where have you been all these seven years? Where's the *Petrel*?" she asked.

"The *Petrel* was hit—hit a night jest about as thick as this. On the Banks, we was," he explained, his shifty eyes anywhere save on her face. "Crack! Jest like that! Steamer come out of the fog and cut us in two. I was at the wheel. Grabbed the top of the wheel box jest as she struck us. Floated round for—oh, a devil of a while—guess I was the only one of the whole crowd saved."

"Who picked ye up?" she quavered. She was aware of a strange and growing

fear of this man she had hoped and prayed for seven years to see.

"Lumber bark, bound to Buenos Ayres. I was 'most dead then, I guess. I don't remember nothin' about it."

"Seven years!" Mrs. Gessler almost sobbed. "Why hadn't you let us know? Why, we've been—"

But suddenly, from some reason she could not have explained, she shut her teeth on the words. William Gessler's shifty eyes wandered about restlessly. He was evidently very ill at ease.

"I—I—well, I thought I might jest as well be dead," he muttered thickly. "I always hated this cussed island. I never could stand it. If I'd been alive you'd have expected me to come back here and marry Marthy and settle down, and fish and eat and die jest like the rest of 'em. I couldn't stand that. It had been eatin' and eatin' at me—the thought had—for a long time."

Mrs. Gessler, at the mention of Martha's name, shrank back as from a blow. She clutched tight her hands. Her eyes began to smolder.

"Not that I got anything ag'in Marthy," the thick voice rumbled on. "She's good enough, as women go; but I couldn't 'a' settled down like I was expected to. I wanted to see life. And I have seen it," he cried, the dull eyes beginning to glow. "I've been to Europe and to Chiny and even to Australia since I was here last. Been before the mast, of course, but I've been there, jest the same. And the things I've seen—God!" he croaked hoarsely, his eyes on fire with his memories. Then the fire died away; his face became dull and apathetic again.

"I wa'n't countin' on ever troublin' any of ye again, and I wouldn't have, neither, if—if—"

He paused.

"If what?" Mrs. Gessler prompted.

William Gessler coughed.

"If I hadn't 'a' got into trouble over on the mainland and hadn't no one else to turn to," he said. "I aint been back this way since I left till now. I jest come back on an Italian brig. She's over to Bayport, unloadin' salt. I got into a fuss with a feller in a place ashore. They took him to the hospital. I think like enough he's goin' to die. If he does, I'm in bad."

"They're watchin' me and I want'er git away. I can't go on no ship, because they're all watched for me, but if I could git a little money—"

"Does anyone know you're here?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"I come over from the mainland in a punt to-night. I left her down in Ragged Cove and come up here from that way. I aint seen a soul on the island but you."

Mrs. Gessler arose. She went to the corner cupboard, where, in an old and noseless china teapot, she kept her savings. She began to count the bills.

"Here's thirty dollars," she said coldly, handing it to him, "if it will do you any good."

He almost grabbed it.

"Good?" he grunted. "It may save my life. I'll git away, and I'll send this back to you as soon as I git another ship."

He had arisen. Mrs. Gessler was holding open the door.

"No," she said hoarsely. "I don't never want it again."

He shuffled off into the fog. She heard his feet wobbling along the path that led to Ragged Cove. She clutched at the doorpost to steady herself.

"And don't never come back! Don't never come back! Don't never come back!" she screamed after him.

Then she blew out the light in the window.

Martha Semmes, walking to the crest of the hill the next evening and looking down for her beacon of hope, suddenly gave a low scream. For the first time in years there was no light in the window.

She ran down the hill and burst breathlessly into the kitchen, where Mrs. Gessler wove away at the endless seines.

"Oh," Martha cried, "it's out—the light! He's dead! He's dead! You know now he's dead! You've given up!"

She sank into a chair by the table, and burying her head on her outspread arms she burst into wild sobbing.

Mrs. Gessler went on with her mending. It was only when the sobs had lessened of their own accord that she spoke.

"Yes, I've give up," she said dully. "It's best. I've been a wicked woman to set myself up ag'in the Lord. William's dead, I guess. And it's better so. I had a warnin' last night—a dream to make me reconciled, and to make you reconciled. You listen to me!"

She turned from the seine. Her eyes glowed like twin coals. A spot of color leaped to either cheek.

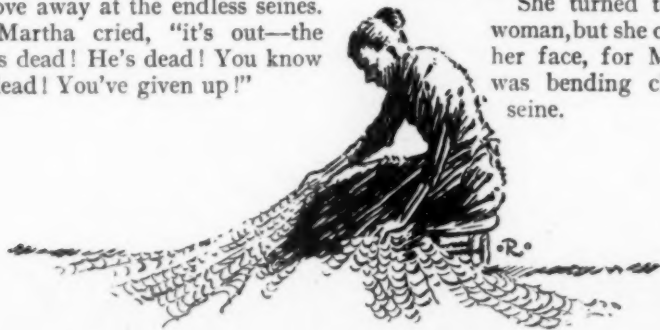
"I dreamt," she said, speaking with effort, as if each word was causing her infinite pain, "that William come back. I dreamt he told me he'd stayed away a-purpose and hadn't let us know he was alive because he was sick of the island here—and sick of us. I dreamt he was dirty and awful-lookin' and drunk with mainland rum, and that he took money off'n me to git away with, because he'd killed a man over on the mainland."

"It was an awful dream. I woke up all of a shiver, but I was glad then William was dead; I was glad, I tell ye—glad! I'm reconciled now. That dream was sent to make me so. And you got to be reconciled, too. We was wrong to set ourselves up ag'in the Lord!"

There was a long, long silence, during which Martha sat gripping the table edge. The older woman's fingers flew at the seine—back and forth, back and forth.

"Oh!" Martha cried chokingly at length. "Oh! I'll be reconciled—yes, I can *make* myself reconciled now. What—what if it hadn't been jest a dream!"

She turned to the older woman, but she could not see her face, for Mrs. Gessler was bending close to the seine.



# The Called Bluff



FREEMAN  
TILDEN

Author of "The  
Yes-Man," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HERB ROTH

**J.** HOLLISTER BENEDICK, night clerk at the Mansion House in Maysville, thrust the telephone receiver back on the hook sharply, and climbed down from the high stool behind the desk. He looked around the office for a bell boy. There was none in sight. So the night clerk went himself to the door of the dining room and announced:

"Up-train, twenty late!"

Then J. Hollister went back to his stool, and his thoughts. His cogitation was not happy. Once in a while he would pull a pen from its resting place between his right ear and the side of his head, and rapidly make figures on a sheet of paper. The figures were evidently not satisfying, as the night clerk shook his head over them and looked glum. The simple fact was that J. Hollister was thinking seriously, and those persons who can think seriously and be cheerful at the same time—well, if this be cynicism, make the most of it!

It was Friday evening. Business in the Mansion House was mainly confined to the first four working days of the week. By Friday night most of the traveling

men were on their way home, except a few stragglers who got marooned through lack of "mileage," non-arrival of expense money, or prospective Saturday business, the latter a rare contingency. Friday night was thus a kind of nervously gloomy affair—there *might* be some business, and you had to stay awake on the hazard of it. Whereas, Saturday and Sundays were avowedly dedicated to unrestful leisure, to the comic supplements, political discussions, cribbage, over-eating, moving pictures, and contemplation of the landscape, as seen from the hotel windows. This last consisted of the nether end of the varnish factory, the right wing of the steam laundry, a coal and wood yard, and an ocular *souffçon* of railroad round-house.

But whatever there was of gloom and foreboding about the Mansion House on this particular Friday evening, was suddenly dispelled by the arrival of the 7:23 up-train; and by the subsequent appearance of the hotel 'bus at the door. The keen eyes of J. Hollister detected, even through two panes of glass, the presence of a man inside the carriage. He straightened up, took a pen out of the potato

that served as a pen-wiper, and cried "Front!" in a brisk tone. The bell boy, however, was on the alert. His eyes likewise were sharp, for a bad week of tips had put an edge on his acquisitiveness. He was standing at the open door, ready to grasp the grips from the driver.

As the newcomer approached the desk, J. Hollister concluded immediately that here was no ordinary traveling salesman. The man was corpulent, but his was the figure graciously and deferentially described in the word "portly." He carried his girth like a man who had planned, very young, to have exactly a certain waist measure; and, having attained it, —bought and paid for it, as it were— he invited inspection and comment. A large diamond—or what represented itself as a diamond—sparkled vivaciously on his shirt bosom. Another flickered gayly on his finger as he put his name on the register. If he had signed "J. Pierpont Morgan" on the book, the night clerk might have doubted the identity, but he could not have challenged the propriety of the forgery. The signature that actually appeared upon the page was even more impressive. It was simple and forceful. It was "Jones, New York." Just "Jones." As if there were only one Jones worth knowing in the greatest city in the country! Then the man laid down the pen and gazed around indulgently.

The doors of the dining room were due to be closed at eight o'clock. This man, who had just been assigned to the "best room in the house," according to his own demand, could have had breakfast at midnight, and there would have been no demur. He entered the dining room with a complacent glance of proprietorship, which included, at one fell sweep, the crockery, tables, chandeliers, and waitresses. He was really no ordinary man—Jones, of New York.

J. Hollister pondered over the signature on the register for some time. He wondered if this man could be a salesman. He certainly did not look like the ordinary run of traveling men who came to Maysville—homely, subdued fellows, in everyday clothes, the sort who "work" the lesser towns throughout the country. The night clerk concluded that this ornate person was selling mining stock, or

was forming a stock-company to raise ginseng, or some pleasant and profitable financial bubble like those.

The stranger came out at last, and stood before the desk, using a tooth-pick vigorously. A tooth-pick is a small thing, but it brought Jones of New York down from Olympus to the floor of the Mansion House with a thud, in the estimation of the night clerk. He felt a sudden equality with this important man. Jones *was* an ordinary person after all, and must be, like all users of tooth-picks, approachable.

"How's business in your line?" asked J. Hollister, suggestively.

"One day after another," replied Jones, without looking up from the register.

"Just so-so?"

"Always so-so," was the answer. Then the man reflected a moment, and asked, looking at the cigar-case, "Have you got any Flor de Pereras?"

"Beg pardon?"

"Flor de Pereras. They cost a dollar apiece."

J. Hollister looked at the stranger a moment, sharply. Then he replied, "No, I'm sorry to say we're all out of them cigars. But we've got Buxton's 'Workman's Pride,' a nickel—a half a dime. They're just as good."

"Just as good as what?" asked the man.

"As those Flor things you asked for."

The stranger threw out his big chest and turned half around, as in simulated disgust. "I can see that you never smoked a dollar cigar," he said.

J. Hollister leaned forward and answered coolly, "No, and I don't believe you ever did, either. Do you know what I think? I think you're a bluff. Mind, I don't hold it up against you," he continued, "only you can't get that stuff by me. Them aint real diamonds you've got on. Now give it to me right, Mr. Jones—aint them stones phony?"

An expression of annoyance hovered on the face of the corpulent man, but only for an instant. It was succeeded by a genial smile, which budded by degrees into a snicker and then bloomed suddenly into one of those hearty laughs such as come only from men of generous

girth. "Well," said Jones, finally, "I guess you've got me. I can see that bluff don't go with you, Mr. Fresh. But you don't have to advertise it around the village, you know."

"Me advertise it!" J. Hollister hastened to reply. "Not on your crayon enlargement. I aint that kind. And don't you think I mean any disrespect, either,

No, I don't think I ever did. I know a feller named Nye—travels for the Boston and Skoowhegan Asbestos Company. He makes this burg every other Thursday. He wouldn't be the man, I suppose?"

"No. This man's name was Ney. I was reading about him the other day. He was a French general, and they called him 'Bravest of the Brave.'"

J. Hollister looked as edified as possible, considering the fact that he felt there was a sting somewhere to come, and he didn't want to be the victim. "Well, what of it?" he asked.

"Nothing, except that I'd hand you a title something like that, Mr.—what's your name?"

"Benedick—J. Hollister Benedick."

"Mr. Benedick, I'd give you the title of 'Nerviest of the Nerve.'"

J. Hollister was pleased. If there was any one thing about his own personality which pleased him most—and he got a lot of keen satisfaction out of the contemplation of himself—it was his "nerve." He prided himself in it. He reached

his hand over to the stout man. "Shake, Mr. Jones," he said. "You're on. I'm on. We're both on. You're a man after my own heart. Let's go to the moving pictures. I can always dead-head into the show across the street, and I guess I can run you in as my guest."

"That's good," said Mr. Jones, with a queer smile.

"You bet it's good," replied J. Hollister. "It's good for two reasons. It improves our social standing. Only people who can afford to pay get free tickets to anything. And besides, you and me, being professional bluffs, as you might say, need to save any little silver coin we can. Because, the funny part of it is, and perhaps you've noticed it, Mr. Jones,—the trouble with being able to get by without money is that you never get to have any money. Aint that a gospel?"



"Take it from me in a pleasant spirit, Mr. Jones—don't monkey with toothpicks. In the hands of amateurs, believe me, they're bad medicine."

Mr. Jones. I appreciate a good, 18-karat, Tiffany-mounted bluff when I see one. I've got some ability in that line myself; otherwise I wouldn't be holding down this job. I give you all credit for your make-up. You've got the presence. You've got the manner. Only, take it from me in a pleasant spirit, Mr. Jones—don't monkey with tooth-picks. In the hands of amateurs, believe me, they're bad medicine. Only the connysooer can use 'em with agility and grace. Fellers like you and me had better leave 'em alone altogether."

Mr. Jones mumbled his lower lip with his teeth. But his good nature came to the rescue. "Did you ever hear of Marshal Ney?" he asked suddenly.

"Nay!" replied J. Hollister. "Excuse me, Mr. Jones, I couldn't help it. Marshal Ney-Nay. See it? It was irresistible.

"I guess you're right," replied Mr. Jones, quivering amidships with amusement. "You've got the world sized up some, Mr. J. Nerviest Benedick."

"It's psychology," added J. Hollister, emphatically.

"Psychology? What's that?"

"I don't know exactly," was the frank reply. "But it's a good word to pull now and then, if you slip it into the conversation right. I've done a lot of business with that word. And a number of traveling men who use it regularly on their customers can thank me for putting them on to it. You see, Mr. Jones, I don't try to put any bluffs over on you. I let you in right back of the scenery."

"I appreciate it, my young friend," said Mr. Jones. "I'll try to be as square with you."

"Good!" said J. Hollister. "Now there's only one more thing, Mr. Jones, and then we'll go over to the movies. You've got enough to pay your bill at the hotel here, haven't you?"

"Yes. Why do you ask that?"

"Well, there is such a thing as carrying a bluff too far," explained J. Hollister. "It wouldn't look well for me to be chumming around with anyone who was going to beat their bill."

"Do I look like that kind?" asked Mr. Jones, a little soberly.

"No, you don't. No, I can see you aint. Excuse me for mentioning it. Only, you understand, there are all kinds of bluffs, and them Pittsburgh diamonds kind of arouse extra suspicion. But I'll bank on you all right. Come on."

The moving pictures, or "movies" as J. Hollister called them, were shown in a little building across from the hotel. It was one of those concrete-block moving picture houses which resemble, architecturally, an eccentric county jail,

and act as a clearing-house for odor.

J. Hollister winked knowingly at the door-man and said in a low voice to that official, as he passed inside: "A particular friend of mine." The ticket-taker was sufficiently impressed. The bright light from an arc in the doorway had reflected the sparkle of one of Mr. Jones' diamonds into his eyes, and being human, he winced. Also being human, he was made unhappy for the whole evening, and his thoughts ran to Socialism, class consciousness, and confiscation of private property.

The first part of the program was educational. It consisted of one scalping, two train robberies and a narrowly averted seduction, together with other uplifting and instructive matter. Then, to clear the house before the next part, there were flashed on the screen some



"Excuse me, Mr. Jones. I just happen to remember that I read the same book as you did. It was called 'Pluck and Luck.'"

views of European capitals. At this interpolation of uncensored matter most of the audience arose in disgust and went out, as they were expected to do. But J. Hollister and his friend stayed. J. Hollister was there to get his money's worth, as he said, and his companion seemed to be enjoying the show intensely. And

when the stereopticon showed the European views, Mr. Jones nudged J. Hollister and said: "I've seen those places. I've been all over Europe. I go over every year."

J. Hollister turned to his companion sharply. "Aw, come now," he warned. "Don't pull that stuff. You'll spoil our acquaintance. Remember, I don't try any bluffs on you. I thought you were going to be on the level with me."

"So I am," said Mr. Jones.

"Well then, you've got to give me fair warning. You mustn't try to kid me like that. When you're going to dream those things, you ought to say, 'J. Hollister,' or 'Benedick, I'm beginning to have thoughts. I was once an Arab chief and had seven hundred wives and two thousand camels. I lived in a tent made of gold leaf, and used to tommyhawk a missionary before breakfast every morning'—or something like that. Then that gives me a chance to come back with something fancy out of my past life—see? And both of us being in on the dreams, it's all right. Get the idea?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Jones, considerably suppressed.

"Now, on that basis, you understand, go ahead and tell me about those sea voyages, if you want to," said J. Hollister.

But the wind had gone from the sails of Mr. Jones. "I guess maybe I was mistaken about being in Europe, after all," he said.

"Maybe you were thinking of Berlin, Connecticut," suggested J. Hollister, "or Paris, Maine."

"Perhaps that was it. I've got a bad memory."

"Well, don't get sore," said J. Hollister. "Perhaps I was a little too sharp in what I said. I just wanted to protect myself, that's all."

"No offense, I assure you," replied Mr. Jones. "It was a little slip on my part."

After the moving pictures were over, J. Hollister and his new friend went back to the hotel. The janitor, who had been left in charge, had fallen asleep with his head on the register. The bell boy had one leg over the arm of a chair and his head against the steam radiator,

and was likewise in slumber. "Look here, Mr. Jones," said J. Hollister, pointing at the two employees and the somnolent surroundings. "This is the pace that kills."

"Kills who?" asked Mr. Jones.

"Maysville," replied J. Hollister, with a chuckle.

"Is it always like this in Maysville, Mr. Benedick?"

"Like this? I guess not. You ought to be here on a Tuesday night, when the traveling men are sleeping double. You'd see an eight-handed game of auction pitch that would knock your eye out. Ten cents up and down, and ten cents every time you get left at the post. I've known a man to drop four dollars and a half in less than three hours."

"I sat in a poker game once,—" began Mr. Jones.

"—Where there were forty thousand dollars in the pot, and everybody lit their cigars with gold bonds," added J. Hollister. "Sure, I remember that game. But this auction pitch game that I'm telling about is played with real money, and whatever you lose has to go onto a genuine expense bill as carriage hire—and that's different, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Mr. Jones, quite crushed, "I suppose it is."

"Half-past nine," said J. Hollister, looking at the clock. "Do you feel sleepy?"

"Not at all."

"That shows you're a non-resident. Neither do I. I suppose the time will come, if I stay here long enough, that I'll be like that." And J. Hollister pointed his finger at the janitor. "But as it is, I'm generally the only one in town that stays awake after ten o'clock on Friday nights. Let's sit here and have a smoke and talk a while. Have one of these?"

"Don't care if I do."

"It isn't a Flor de what-do-you-call it," added the night clerk, with a grin. "It's a ten center."

Mr. Jones smiled. "I guess I can smoke it," he said.

"I guess you've smoked worse, Mr. Jones."

Mr. Jones had a sudden reminiscent and far-away look in his eyes. "Yes," he replied, with a sigh, "I have."

"If you don't mind," said J. Hollister, when they had lighted up and tilted their chairs back against the wall, "tell me something about yourself. I can see that you've got a history. I don't mean to be over inquisitive, but I'll bet you've had some great experiences—real ones, I mean, not pipe-dreams."

"I don't know, I don't know," replied the other man. "You don't put much stock in what I try to tell you."

"Forget what I said about pipe-dreams, Mr. Jones, and go ahead with the yarn. Make it just as interesting as you want to. Consider the law is off on yarns after nine-thirty. Fire away!"

Mr. Jones looked at the night clerk out of the corner of his eyes, and a roguish expression played around his mouth. "I'll tell you the story of my life," he said.

"Good," said J. Hollister.

"I don't know as I ever had any great experiences," began Mr. Jones, "but as I sit here and think of it, and look back over the past, it's been a queer sort of a game. You wouldn't think, would you, that I started in business with nothing but a suit of made-over clothes, and a dozen or so newspapers that a good-hearted policeman staked me to? Well, that's the truth. I didn't have any shoes or stockings, even. After my mother died, my father lost his courage, and was never any good afterward. Booze, and all that kind of thing, you know. And I had to shift for myself. I've been doing it ever since. I used to sleep nights in a little shack under the New York end of Brooklyn Bridge."

Mr. Jones was interrupted in his narrative by a half-suppressed snicker. He turned sharply to J. Hollister. "Well?" he asked.

"Excuse me, Mr. Jones. I just happened to remember that I read the same book as you did. It was called 'Pluck and Luck' or 'From Gutter-snipe to General Manager.' I remember the little shack under Brooklyn Bridge."

"Yes, that's the same shack," replied Mr. Jones. "A lot of barefoot newsboys have slept in it, I reckon. Well, the point is that I got into one business after another, and finally made my pile. Would you believe that to-day, about

forty years after I used to be selling newspapers in the streets, I could sign a check for a million dollars or so without having it come back marked 'no funds?'"

"No, I wouldn't," replied J. Hollister, "if you ask it in that tone of voice. But if it helps the yarn along any, I would."

"I didn't think you would," replied Mr. Jones. "Now tell me something about yourself."

"Me?" said the night clerk. "There's nothing special to tell about me, except that I was the youngest son of an English nobleman—it wouldn't do for me to mention my real name. I got into trouble at home, and became a remittance-man, and though I could go back to England to-day and claim my share of the estate, my pride wouldn't let me."

Mr. Jones laughed. Mr. Benedick laughed. Then Mr. Jones yawned. "I believe I do feel tired, after all," he said. "I guess I'll get to bed if you'll have some one show me my room. And put a call down for that early train south, will you? Can I get breakfast as early as that?"

"Sure," replied the clerk. "The dining-room will be open. I won't be up myself, so I'll say good-by. I don't suppose you get around these parts often?"

"No; I've got no business here. I came down from up North to-day, a long ride, and I thought I'd break my trip here and get a good night's sleep in a real bed."

J. Hollister hesitated a moment, with his mouth half open.

"Well, say it," said Mr. Jones. "What's on your mind?"

"I was just looking at that diamond on your finger. Do you mind telling me where I could get one of those stones?"

"Why, I got this from a friend of mine in the business," replied Mr. Jones. "It does look like the real thing, doesn't it?" he added, flashing it in the rays of the incandescent lamps. "I dare say I could get you one or two of them if you wanted 'em. Or you can have this one. Sure. I can get another one of them. Here, take this." Mr. Jones took the ring from his finger and held it out to the night clerk.

"No; I want to pay for it," said J. Hollister.

"Really, I couldn't sell it. But I'll

give it to you. And I'll wager there aren't more than two people in this town who could tell it from the real thing—and you're one of them, and I'm the other," said Mr. Jones. "Here, I insist."

"I'd rather pay you for it," insisted J. Hollister. "It looks as if I had begged it off of you."

"Not at all. Take it." And the night clerk finally did.



J. Hollister Benedick usually got down to the hotel office about eleven in the morning, but on the day following the arrival and departure of Mr. Jones of New York, the night clerk was up early. He was anxious to see what impression his ring was going to make.

The proprietor of the hotel, Mr. Weatherbee, was behind the desk when J. Hollister appeared. The night clerk exchanged a few words with the employer, meanwhile letting his hand—the one bearing the ring—rest as obtrusively as possible on the edge of the cigar-case. Suddenly Mr. Weatherbee caught sight of the ring and grunted. "Say, Benedick," he remarked, "do you want to blind me? Take that away from here."

"Oh, that?" said J. Hollister. "Oh yes—what do you think of it?"

"I don't think of it. I just forgot for a minute they still sold packages of popcorn that had those things inside 'em."

"Huh!" replied J. Hollister, moving away.

The next commentator was a traveling salesman. "The only trouble with those things," was his remark, "is that when you take them off, you find a black mark all around your finger. Blood wont tell anywhere near as quick as brass."

J. Hollister began to inspect the ring more closely. In the face of such definite

"You aren't going to wear that when you're on duty, are you son?"

disapproval it did not seem to sparkle as valiantly as it had under the electric lights the night before. But the finish of the ring came when the proprietor took the night clerk aside and said in a kind but firm voice: "You aren't going to wear that when you're on duty, are you, son?"

"Why not?"

"Because it looks cheap and foolish, Benedick. It'll make a joke of you, and what makes a joke of you makes a joke of the house. Don't get mad. Think it over."

J. Hollister went up to his room and sat down and began to think. After a while he uttered, half-aloud, a choice bit of philosophy. "It makes a difference who wears 'em," he said, taking off the ring. "I guess it's something like this: if you've got the goods, even a fake diamond will add to your appearance. If you haven't, even a real diamond wont." And he opened the window and tossed the ring out into the back yard.

It was a few weeks afterward that J. Hollister Benedick came down to the hotel office late one morning and was standing in front of the desk talking with the proprietor and running through the names that had gone on the register



"Hello, there, my young friend," cried the visitor

during the morning. Suddenly a big touring car shot into view in front of the hotel, and stopped with a lurch. A bell boy went on a gallop to the door and held it open; a porter darted outside to grasp coats and bags; the proprietor straightened up behind the desk and looked as hospitable and refined as possible, and J. Hollister retreated a few steps and stood at almost military attention. Such is the power of the touring car over the human soul, of matter over mind. And just between ourselves, automobile parties are "easy money."

But only one of the occupants of the automobile alighted, and he gave no evidence of desiring board or bait. The hotel force relaxed professionally. Employer and employees suffered the inevitable reaction of having their hopes raised to a high pitch only to be crushed—all save J. Hollister. He saw a portly figure coming through the door, caught the flash of a diamond pin, and recognized Mr. Jones of New York. At the same moment Mr. Jones caught sight of the night clerk.

"Hello there, my young friend," cried the visitor. "I was going through this town, and I felt I had to stop a few minutes to see you. How's your nerve?"

They shook hands. J. Hollister

glanced in the direction of his employer. With the recollection of the ring fresh in his memory, he was a little shamefaced about this boisterous recognition. To his astonishment Mr. Weatherbee was leaning over the desk, his mouth and eyes expressing the utmost wonderment.

"Can't stop a minute. I've got to be getting on," said Mr. Jones. "But I wanted another look at you, and I wanted—what else was it I wanted?—oh, yes, I wanted to give you one of my Flor de Pereras." He took a long fat cigar from his pocket and thrust it into the breast-pocket of J. Hollister's coat.

"Thanks," gurgled the night clerk. Then, with a grin and pointing to the motor-car he asked in a low tone: "How do you do it?"

Jones, of New York, shook with internal merriment. "It's easy when you know how. Good luck to you, son. Good-by." And the door slammed and he was gone.

J. Hollister took the cigar from his pocket, inspected it, sniffed at it, and knew it for a superior and almost fabulous product. "By jingo, he made good on the Flor business," he admitted to himself.

The voice of the hotel proprietor interrupted further speculation.

"Why don't you introduce us to your wealthy and influential friends, Benedick?" he asked.

"Wealthy and influential is good," replied J. Hollister. "Do you know who that was?"

"I should say I do," was the reply. "That is, I know him by sight. But I didn't think you and he were chums. But maybe," he continued banteringly, "you're a millionaire in disguise, and just sort of do this clerking stunt out of preference."

"What do you know about him?" asked the clerk.

"Well, all I know about him is that he's J. B. Jones, the New York millionaire. The papers and magazines have had a lot to say about him, haven't they? Worked up from a newsboy to be president of the Construction Trust, and all that sort of thing. Used to sleep under Brooklyn bridge and now he owns a castle. Goes to Europe every year and spends money like a prince. A kind of an eccentric cuss, aint he? That's what I've

understood. Likes to do queer things, and don't mind what they cost. But say, you must know a good deal more than—"

J. Hollister interrupted him. "Say, Mr. Weatherbee, he aint the kind of a man who would wear a fake diamond, is he?"

"Fake diamond? Well, I should say not. Why, he—*here, where are you going?*"

J. Hollister had started for the back door on the run, leaving the hotel proprietor staring after him.

An hour later the proprietor asked of the porter: "Have you seen Mr. Benedick around here lately?"

"The last time I seen him he was out in the back yard scratching around in the ash heaps like a hen with two dozen chickens. He said he'd lost something."

The proprietor shook his head. "Gosh, I'm afraid it's his mind," he said.



## THE PROXIES

**I**T is a most unusual suggestion," said the matron of St. Agatha's Home For Little Ones. "I don't think I fully understand the reason for it."

William Arkwright drummed a nervous tattoo on the crown of the hat in his lap.

BY  
RICHARD  
BARKER  
SHELTON

"There isn't any reason," he said, "except that I would like to do something for the children here. I am not a man of means, but I'd like to do a little. So I thought if you would allow, say,

two of the children to go with me for the afternoon I might take them to the theatre or one of the pleasure parks or—"

He paused. The matron's face was not particularly encouraging. Its expression seemed to suggest that he was taking up her time unnecessarily.

"I'm perfectly respectable," he went on. "You might call up Dr. Storrs of the Second Church, if *that's* it. He will be glad to tell you about me."

"We have never tried anything of the sort before," said the matron. "As I say, it has never been suggested. I really don't believe I'd care to take the initiative in the matter."

"I'm sorry I've taken up your time," said Arkwright rather stiffly. "I had hoped you would welcome the idea. You see, I am a married man, but I haven't any children of my own."

Something in the way he said it; something, too, in the wistful, disappointed eyes of the shabby, gray-haired little man before her, warmed the matron's heart to him in some sudden and unaccountable manner.

"Wait just a minute," she urged. "Sit down again, please."

She left the sunny reception room and Arkwright heard her footsteps moving down the long, bare but scrupulously clean hall. He heard her talking in low tones with some one at the farther end. Then he heard her returning, but she did not come at once into the reception-room. Instead she entered the little office just across the hall and Arkwright caught the tinkle of the telephone. He smiled, not without a certain satisfaction, as he heard the matron's voice asking for Dr. Storrs' number.

A few moments later she came into the reception-room.

"I don't know whether or not I am overstepping my authority, but I'm going to take the chance," she said with a pleasant smile at Arkwright. "There are two children who have recently come here—a brother and sister. They are not as happy as we could wish. I think, perhaps, if they should care to accept your invitation it might be a good thing all around. Perhaps an afternoon of fun that would make them forget their little homesick troubles here would help a lot. It's worth trying, anyway. So if they care to go with you, I shall let them. We'll leave the acceptance wholly to them."

She struck a bell on the table.

"Miss Martin," she instructed the trim nurse who answered the summons, "be good enough to bring the two Carlton children, if you will."

The nurse departed, to return presently with the children the matron had requested—a round-faced boy of ten, and a chubby little girl of eight, who clung to the nurse's skirts, half-hiding herself diffidently behind them.

"Now, my dears," said the matron, holding out a hand to each, "this nice gentleman has come here to give two of the children here an afternoon's fun. He is a very nice gentleman and he's very fond of little boys and girls. Would you like to go with him?"

"Where to?" the boy asked with blunt practicality.

"Why, why,—," the matron began and realized suddenly that she didn't know just where herself.

"Anywhere you care to go," Arkwright declared magnanimously.

"Circus?" the boy persisted.

"Why, surely, if there were only one in town; but there isn't. Now anywhere else—"

Arkwright was leaning forward, smiling at the small pair. A great deal depended on the impression he made now, he realized. It made him rather nervous to think of it.

"Well, the ball-game, then?" the boy queried.

"If you say so," Arkwright promised.

The boy turned to his small sister. "Let's go," he suggested. "Want to?"

The little girl twisted a corner of her gingham pinafore in her fingers. She refused to look either at her brother or at Arkwright.

"M—h'm!" she agreed at length, with a jerky little affirmative bob of her small head.

Ten minutes later Arkwright stood on the broad, brown-stone steps of St. Agatha's home, a small boy grasping his right hand and a chubby little girl clutching desperately his left.

"Now then, where to?" he asked his charges delightedly.

"You said the ball-game," the boy reminded him with a certain hint of scornful suspicion.

"So I did, so I did," said Arkwright hastily. "Only I thought perhaps the ball-game wouldn't be the most interesting thing in the world for the little lady. Do *you* want to go to the ball-game?" he bent over her to inquire.

"M—h'm, if I can have some candy," she agreed with the most winning of smiles.

"Candy? Why, bless my soul, of course," Arkwright assured her. "We were going to have candy anyway, and peanuts, too, and pop. And when we come back we'll start in time to have something to eat somewheres."

The boy looked up at him with bulging eyes.

"Honest?" he asked.

"Cross my heart on it," declared Arkwright, remembering the binding oath of his own boyhood.

"O-o-oh!" gurgled the little girl ecstatically.

"Say," said the boy, looking up and unconsciously tightening his grip on Arkwright's thin hand, "say, you're *all right*."

"Am I?" laughed the man. "Well, now that's great. We're going to get on fine, aren't we? And we're going to have the greatest little old afternoon of it that ever was. Tell you what, let's make a game of it. Let's play I was your pa and you call me Pa. Will you?"

"Sure!" said the boy. "That'll be fun. Call him Pa when you speak to him, Janey—see?"

The girl looked up at him with that slow, diffident smile of hers.

"Are we 'most to the place where you get the candy—Pa?" she asked.

Arkwright laughed happily. Being very young, neither of the children noticed a certain catch in that laugh. They only knew that they were ushered into the drug-store on the corner, lifted onto high stools before the gorgeous soda-fountain and imbibed something very delicious from long glasses, while Arkwright bought candy with marvelous prodigality.

Then they boarded a car and went happily out to the ball grounds.

Arkwright, being a gray, plodding little man, with not an ounce of sporting blood in his veins, knew nothing of the

thrills or the intricacies of the national game. But he howled when the boy beside him howled, and he booed when the small boy booed, and he bought peanuts and pop, and saw to it that the little girl didn't make herself sick with the candy, and generally had the most delicious, wholly satisfying afternoon he could remember.

And when, after the game was over, and they were pushing up the steps of the pavilion towards the exit, the boy tugged at his sleeve and said, "Aw, gee, Pa, that sure was some game, wasn't it?" his cup of happiness seemed full to overflowing.

On the way home they stopped at a little restaurant on a side street. It was not an expensive restaurant, but it was eminently clean and wholesome.

Arkwright, with his two charges, took a table at the far end—a table in a corner where he would not be conspicuous. The way he solicitously tucked the napkins into the two small necks would have stamped him a family man of long standing, and the manner in which he gravely deliberated on such questions as: "Kin I have cream pie, Pa?" or "Are you gonna buy us ice-cream, Pa?" served further to heighten this impression.

It was six o'clock when they returned to St. Agatha's Home. Arkwright, not without certain reluctance, delivered his charges to the matron in the reception-room, and watched a nurse lead them away.

"Well, they look as if they'd had the time of their lives," said the matron. "This is the first time they have seemed really happy since they came here."

"The time they've had is nothing to the one they've given me," said Arkwright with conviction. "Do you suppose I could have them again next Saturday afternoon?"

"Wouldn't it be better to give some of the other children an outing then?" she asked.

"I'd like these same two, if I might have them," Arkwright maintained.

The matron looked at him narrowly, and with a hint of understanding in her own eyes.

"I think perhaps it can be arranged," she said.

Therefore the next Saturday Arkwright again appeared at the Home and the three of them went to a vaudeville show; the following Saturday it was a trip down the harbor on one of the excursion boats; the next the circus was in town—and a long-to-be-remembered afternoon it was for all three of them.

Arkwright began to take a new bearing to himself. His stooping shoulders straightened somewhat; there came a look to the tired, faded blue eyes that had been lacking for years; also much of his meekness and his lack of decision had fallen from him.

At the office of Gray & Stoughton, where for twenty years Arkwright had been a book-keeper, the change was frankly commented upon.

"What's got into old Arkwright of late?" young Evans, one of the men who had charge of the asphalt contracts asked. "Looks like he'd got a new lease of life. He works as if he really had his heart in it now? Acts as if he had something to work *for*."

"Maybe he's one of these late wakers that has just woke up," said Crosby, the office manager, with a sly wink.

At the austere little flat which Arkwright called home, Mrs. Arkwright, too, noticed the subtle change that had come over him. She was a sharp-faced, nervous woman, who, for her thirty years of married life with Arkwright, had put up one incessant plaint at the meagerness of her lot. She was the sort of woman who insists that her husband turn his wages over to her since she is so much better manager than he; the sort who turns him back a trifling allowance for his lunches and carfares and puts the bulk of the rest in the savings-bank; the sort who scruples not to sacrifice her own or her husband's comfort, if by so doing another dollar can be added to the bank books. Mrs. Arkwright was the type of woman who is forever finding that she can't afford things. It accounted for much in Arkwright's pale, half-starved and wholly circumscribed existence.

"I wish I felt as well and as young as you do," she said complainingly to her husband that Saturday morning as he started for the office.

"I wish you did, Celia," he replied, looking at her with a queer light in his eyes.

He took the youngsters to Surfside Park that Saturday afternoon. They did the whole round of hair-raising stunts from the flying-horses to the tilting-bowl. They waded barefoot in the pools about the rocks; they ate pop-corn on the pier while they listened to one of the afternoon band-concerts. It was a wholly wonderful afternoon, like all the other Saturday afternoons since that first one when Arkwright had gone to St. Agatha's Home.

Mrs. Hughes, portly, thin-lipped, gossipy, who dwelt in the flat just below the Arkwrights, climbed puffingly up the stairs at a most unseemly hour that Monday morning. Indeed, it was not ten minutes after Arkwright had left for the office that Mrs. Hughes rapped smartly on the hall door he had but recently closed behind him.

Mrs. Hughes' attitude was that strange mixture of triumph and pity that only such as Mrs. Hughes know how to assume.

"I don't know as I'm doing right in coming to you with this thing, Mrs. Arkwright," said she smirkingly, as she settled herself in the rocker in the Arkwrights' front room. "I said first I'd keep my mouth shut; then I says to myself you'd oughta know it; then I told myself twa'n't none of my business; but after that it come to me that even if it wa'n't mine, it was *yours*. I debated with myself all day yesterday, but this morning I made up my mind you'd oughta know."

Mrs. Hughes crossed to the sofa where Mrs. Arkwright sat and took one of that lady's hands in both her own.

"Now, dearie, don't take it too hard," she advised, "but—"

Here Mrs. Hughes put her lips close to the other woman's ear and whispered excited sibilants. At the end of it Mrs. Arkwright screamed. Then she jumped up, clutching her throat. Then she faced her informer dramatically.

"It can't be!" she wailed. "It can't be! Mrs. Hughes, what are you telling me? You must be mistaken!"

Mrs. Hughes shook her head so vi-

olently as to endanger an atrocious false-front of brown curls.

"My Mary was with me. She saw 'em, too," she maintained. "We followed 'em all over Surfside Park, unbeknownst to them. There was two children—a boy of about ten, and a pretty little girl that I should say was eight or so. He was taking them into all the shows, and buying them everything they wanted."

Mrs. Hughes paused. "And like I was telling you, both of them called him Pa!" She repeated her most telling shot.

Mrs. Arkwright screamed once more and then collapsed face-down on the sofa-pillows, while Mrs. Hughes waddled to the kitchen for water.

When Arkwright reached the flat that night he stumbled over two bulging suitcases close to the door; behind the suitcases was a strapped trunk; behind the trunk was Mrs. Arkwright ready for the street, even to her bonnet, and the rolled umbrella without which she never ventured forth.

"Celia!" gasped Arkwright.

"Don't speak to me! Don't touch me!" she said in the very tones she had decided upon earlier in the afternoon as best suited for this occasion.

Mr. Arkwright had given no indication of touching her; but none the less he jumped back nervously.

"What—what—" he began.

Then Mrs. Arkwright spoke again. She spoke at length. She spoke tearfully, accusingly, brokenly and complainingly, each by turn. At the end of it Arkwright sank down on the trunk.

"Listen!" he said very quietly. "I was there at Surfside Park Saturday; I was there with two children; Mrs. Hughes was right in all she told you, even to the fact that they called me Pa.

"They were two children from St. Agatha's Home For Little Ones. I—I—you see,"—Arkwright was finding his explanation a hard one,—"*we* haven't any of our own, Celia. We couldn't *afford* them." He spoke with bitter emphasis. "I—I—God knows I've wanted children more than anything else in the world—so—I borrowed two of them from the Home each Saturday afternoon. I—"

He choked. His eyes blazed suddenly; as suddenly the light died in them, leaving them cold and sullen.

"Go now, if you want to," he said, stalking into the little dining-room.

She saw him sit down in his accustomed place although the table was not set; saw him drop his head on his outstretched arms and begin to sob chokingly.

The matron of St. Agatha's Home sat beneath the flickering gas-jets in the reception-room chandelier. On either knee was a sleepy child, wrapped in a blanket. The persistence of the visitor who sat nearby had been responsible for the breaking of the rules.

"These are the two," said the matron. "Oh, no. I think there'll be no trouble about adopting them. And I know they'll be very happy with you. They are very fond of Mr. Arkwright. I have just learned that they already call him Pa when they go out with him."





Then Sam opened his mouth in a blood-curdling series of yells, and started running after the mare.

# The Blackjack Bezzle

*Sunlover Sam Gets His  
Business in a Jam*

by HARRIS DICKSON

Author of "Old Reliable"

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ILLUSTRATED BY GAYLE HOSKINS

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**T**HE new church on Blackjack hill was almost finished. Carpenters were busily getting out of the way and women were busily getting in the way. The sneeze-sneeze-sneeze of the saw, and bang-bang-bang of the hammer ceased, when the wrangle of the congregation broke out in a new place. Majority and minority factions lined up like children at a spelling bee—for and ag'in' the preacher, for and ag'in' Sunlover Sam, the treasurer.

Sunlover knew the spark that was going to touch off the fireworks. Those meddlesome women had pried and eavesdropped until they found out exactly how much money the treasurer ought to have on hand. Sam didn't have it.

The tiny church, yellow, staring and shamelessly unpainted, uprose in the clearing opposite Cynthia 'Riah's house. At one end its dinky steeple faced the plantation road; at the other end a post-script had been tacked on, which from

the outside looked like a piano box converted into a bay window. Inside, it formed a niche for Elder Addaway's swing-tailed frock. Minority sisters maintained that this ought to be wider so that the elder could walk about and sling his arms in more expansive exhortations.

Every morning old fat Cynthy 'Riah waddled across the road and sat on the same stump to jaw at the workmen for being so slow. Sunlover always sneaked around the back way and whispered, "You fool niggers, lettin' dat ole 'ooman work y'all to death. I'd knock off an' res' some ef I was you."

The foreman paused and took a nail out of his mouth, as he answered: "We wants to wind up dis job by Saddy an' git our money."

Cynthy 'Riah startled him. "Here you Sam, quit dat talkin' an' let dem men go 'long wid deir work. Atter I give dis lan' to de church dey aint gwine to git it ready to open on de fust Sunday o' de munt."

"Open! huh!" retorted Sunlover; "you got to cons'crate hit; folks don't open a church same as ef 'twuz a can o' sardines."

That's why Sam had to climb the back fence in such a hurry, with the lash of Cynthy 'Riah's tongue behind him. The old woman gathered an apron full of kindling wood and waddled back home.

Sam had the fidgets over what was going to take place when those carpenters didn't get their money on Saturday night. "Dis bein' on a Thursday," he muttered; he dug both hands into his pockets and hustled towards the store.

Rufe Batts was sitting, all humped up, on the bench in front of the store. Rufe eased himself off the gallery and caught Sam by the lapel, conducting him to a secluded spot beneath the gin shed. Being leader of the majority faction, Rufe believed in gum shoes, lapels, and secluded spots. "Look here, Sam, dese 'nority faction niggers is got it all fixed up to call a meetin' to-morrer an' 'lect a treasurer."

"Aint dey got a treasurer? Whyn't dey 'lect sumpin' what dey aint got?"

"Dat's what dey say?"

"Who say? 'Taint nobody but dat ole Cynthy 'Riah. Give a dime's wuth o' lan' to de church, den made us cut de stove wood an' pile it up side o' her kitchen. Dat's all she done."

"Sis Tildy, she say—"

"Tildy! Huh! Calls herself *President* o' de Ladies' Aid. Got up a festerfal and cleared six bits. Aint never quit talkin' 'bout dat six bits. Mister Will don't open he mouf—he give twenty dollars."

"Dat aint neither here nor yonder; deir head done sot."

"What us gwine to do?"

"Beat 'em. What's de sense o' bein' 'jority ef you can't beat 'em?"

At high noon on Friday the cracked bell of the old church called together those warring factions. Elder Addaway mounted the rostrum and rapped prudently. "Dearly beloved," he proclaimed, "y'all knows de puppose o' dis meetin'?"

Cynthy 'Riah slammed a hymn-book on the seat. "Sho do," she said. "We gwine to 'scharge Sunlover Sam."

Rufe Batts took the floor before anybody else thought about it. "I moves to re-'lect Brother Samuel Grubbs."—The same being Sunlover Sam.

"I'm ag'in' dat," Sister Tildy shouted.

Cynthy 'Riah rose and moved; when she rose and moved she shook the church. "I makes a move dat we 'lects Brudder Sandy Adams."

"I seconds dat move," piped up Reeny Adams. But she was old man Sandy's daughter, and everybody expected that.

Rufe Batts kept his feet. "Set down, Cynthy 'Riah, you'se de 'nority. 'Nority aint got nothin' to do but set still."

"Aint gwine to set still, an' I aint no 'nority. When I takes a side, dat's de 'jority. I'se 'jority *myse'f*."

Unc' Aaron Briscoe tottered up and grabbed the pew in front of him.

"Reckon I got *some* say—aint I trustee?"

Rufe Batts grinned. "Trustee, trustee! You'll be trustee when you gits to de pentencherry—ef dey lets you walk aroun' widout no guard. *Dat's* what white folks call a trustee."

"Yes," Unc' Aaron shouted back, "de white folks sont a white man to de pen las' gone cote—sont 'im up fer 'bezzle—Mr. Alex Jordon what kep de county money."

Sunlover glanced savagely at Uncle Aaron, then thought it safer to hold his jaw. Rufe Batts smiled, and started the steam-roller with: "I makes a move dat us come to a vote."

"I sees yo' move," nodded the presiding elder.

Cynthy 'Riah stepped out in the aisle. "I don't like de way things is goin'. Aint I done give my lan' to dis church?"

"Huh, you jes give dat lan' so you could set on yo' gallery an' see all de fust-class fun'rals. Done carried 'way nuff kindlin' wood to more'n pay fer it."

"Vote! Vote!" shouted Rufe Batts, and all those 'jority niggers joined in with him.

The ballots counted eight to six in favor of Brother Samuel Grubbs, and Rufe grinned like the knowledgy leader who knew it all before-hand. "Moves we 'journ," he called.

"Hole up." Sis Tildy flirted herself out in the aisle beside Cynthy 'Riah; "I makes a move dat Sam go to town an' git dat money."

To Sam's intense disgust Rufe Batts agreed. "I speaks fer de hon'ble treasurer. He's gwine to town dis evenin' an' fetch dat money outen de bank."

Sunlover protested. "I don't like to start nowhar on Friday; it's an onlucky day."

"It'll be a lucky day ef we gits our money," said Sis Tildy.

"Oh, button up yo' lip an' give yo' tongue er holiday," Sam jeered.

Sis Tildy gave herself a sarcastic jerk and sat down. Two or three fool niggers snickered, and Elder Addaway seized that auspicious moment to declare the meeting adjourned.

Sunlover and Rufe Batts paraded to the store with Cynthy 'Riah and Tildy close behind them. Cynthy 'Riah waddled straight to the boss; of course Rufe had to go to see what tale she was totin'. "Mr. Will, I wants to know 'zackly how much money our church is got."

Sam peeped in at the door as the young planter opened his safe and took out a memorandum. "You had a hundred and thirty-six dollars and fifteen cents. You drew seven checks for ten dollars each to pay the carpenters on account. That leaves sixty-six dollars and fifteen cents."

Cynthy 'Riah nodded. "Dat's right, Mr. Will. Please set it down on a piece o' paper. Sunlover Sam's got to fetch dat much—aint he?"

"Yes. Now Cynthy, I want this squab-

bling stopped. Sam, come here. Take my old gray mare and the jumper. Go straight to town and get that money."

Sam sneaked back to the boss after the others were gone. "Mr. Will, please suh, lemme have a quarter. I hates to see yo' tenants go to town an' ack pore. Thankee, Mr. Will." Sam slouched off, then came back and asked: "What's dis I hear 'bout Mr. Alec Jordan?"

"Who? The county treasurer? He went to the pen."

"What fer?"

"Embezzlement—county funds."

"Bezzle—dat's what I hear dem niggers specify. What do dat mean, Mr. Will?"

"When they called on him for the money he didn't have it. Judge gave him three years."

"Lordy! Reckon dey'd give a nigger 'bout three hundred."

"More or less. Hurry now and get back before night."

Cynthy 'Riah, Tildy, Reeny Adams and a chattering flock of negroes perched on the store gallery to watch Sam hitch up the old gray mare. Cynthy 'Riah waved her paper. "Dis paper calls fer sixty-six dollars and fifteen cents; I'm gwine to be here waitin' when you gits back wid it."

"Me too!"—Unc' Aaron Briscoe had to stick in his mouth. "I'm gwine to set right here till we gits dat money—ef de seat o' my breeches holds out."

Sam started off in the jumper—one of those spider-wheeled contraptions which carries a single seat on a spring.

At four-thirty p. m. a big, chocolate-faced, anxious looking negro poked his head in at the bank door. "**BANK CLOSED**" confronted him. Sunlover couldn't get the money to-night; which ought to satisfy those niggers. He was quietly withdrawing his head when the cashier called: "Come back here, Sam."

Mr. Cooper sat in the director's room signing some letters. "Here's Sam. Mr. Will telephoned for me to hold out your balance and have a statement made up."

Sam recognized his long red wallet, long enough to hold a bank note without folding it. The cashier unstrapped the rubber band, and took out some papers.



"I'm a spote," said the dumpy negro, jingling a pair of dice. "Don't take up nigh as much room as a plow, an' yo' fields is everywhar. Allers makes a good crop."

"Various deposits, one hundred and six dollars and fifteen cents; checks seventy dollars. Cash balance, thirty-six dollars and fifteen cents. Here's seven five-dollar bills, and the change. All vouchers returned. Everything straight as a string."

Sam limped out of the bank as if his feet weren't mates. His shoes hurt him; it was the fact of being thirty dollars short, twenty that the boss had donated and ten from Dr. Crandall—none of which had ever reached the bank. On other depositing occasions several inquisitive sisters had always been present to see that the money went in. Sam put the small change in his breeches pocket. The currency, canceled checks and other papers lay length-wise in the wallet. This he stowed inside his coat.

Sam paused on the edge of the sidewalk, then rambled down the street, occasionally clapping a hand to his breast pocket, a gesture which did not escape a certain dumpy negro whose long suit was to keep his eye skinned for pocket-books. Sam was staring into the pawnshop window when he ambled up and said: "Hello pardner, how's de cat a-hoppin'?"

Sunlover wasted two good hours loafing around town with the dumpy negro. And Sam did most of the talking—bragged his brags about how much cotton he had sold, and how much cash money he had in his pocket. According to Samuel, this was more'n a mule's ear full o' money. But Sam wouldn't drink, and he sidestepped even a crap game proposition. The dumpy negro had to do something else.

Just before dark Sunlover turned the gray mare homeward, jogging over the sand-hills and jostling across the gullies. His plodding mare seemed to pull the road towards her and beneath her—like the slats of a tread-mill. Sam hated every foot of that road, for Cynthia 'Riah waited at the other end.

Sam had his mind set on Cynthia 'Riah, and wasn't studying about that dumpy negro who rode up behind him and spoke, right at his wheel: "Hello pardner, here you is again."

"Hello yo'se'f! Whar you gwine?"

"Ridin' out de road a little piece."

"You aint no farmer, is you?" The dumpy negro didn't look like a farmer, with that big gold horse-shoe dangling from his watch chain.

The dumpy negro laughed. "Not 'zackly, but when dese niggers gits my goat, dey say I rolls de bones like a farmer."

"Rolls de bones?"

"Yes, I'm a spote. Good money in it too."

"Say dey is?"

"Fer dem what's on de inside; cose dey aint none fer de producers."

"P'ducers?"

"Yep—dey fetches money in de game."

"I reckon dat's a heap easier dan plowin'," Sam remarked thoughtfully.

"Sho is—dat's all you needs." The dumpy negro jingled a pair of dice. "Don't take up nigh as much room as a plow, an' yo' fields is everywhar. Allers makes a good crop."

"Say you do?" Sam checked the gray mare while the town sport got out a second pair of dice. "One pair fer you, an' one fer the producer," he explained; "wid yo' pair you kin make a pass any time you gits ready; an' de producer wid *dat* pair, dey wouldn't pass fer Abaham Lincum—dey aint no passes on dat pair o' bones."

Sam stopped the mare entirely. "Dat 'pears to be some kind of a cinch."

"Cinch aint no name fer it. All you got to do is to stake out some country niggers wid more money dan what de law 'lows. Let 'em win once or twice jes to hook 'em good, den reach in yo' jeans an' git *dese* bones—it's all over 'cept de scrappin'." You got to 'low fer some scrappin'."

"Kin you win as much as five dollars—or *thirty* dollars?" Sam kept on studying about the thirty dollars that was short.

"Dat's pikin'; you reckon I'd pay two dollars fer a hoss an' ride five miles in de country to git thirty dollars? I aint no cheap man."

"Is you goin' fer?"

"Jes a little piece. Some country niggers fotch deir cotton to town dis mornin' an' dey got a crap game out here. I 'lowed I'd drap in an' mop up the loose change." The dumpy sport announced

his purpose with such beautiful certainty that Sam involuntarily grunted: "Whar is dey gwine ter play?"

"In dat ole blacksmith shop on Jedge Butler's place."

Sam nodded; he passed that blacksmith shop every time he came to town.

"Dem niggers is got two hundred dollars—good money. I reckon you aint never rolled the bones?"

"Yas I is—rolls 'em mighty good," Sam defended himself promptly, "—wins plenty money, den gits broke like all de rest."

The dumpy negro laughed. "Dat's jes de diffunce twixt de man what knows how, an' de man what don't know how. You aint never heard o' *Commodore* goin' broke?"

"Is you de one dey calls 'Commodo'?"

"Sholy. You warn't talkin' wid me all dat time an' never knowed who I was?"

"I didn't 'zackly know, but I heerd a heap o' 'Commodo'." Sam leaned back on his reins and gazed at the redoubtable sport. They rode in silence except for the rattling of the jumper's wheels, until Commodore pulled out of the highway towards the blacksmith shop.

"Good-by pardner. I'll turn dis trick in less dan no time."

Sam stopped abruptly: "Lemme go in an' see de fun."

"May be you'll spile it; I got to ack mighty green, you understand?" Commodore winked.

"I kin ack green myse'f ef I tries."

Between two huge oak trees the wide-open and dismantled smithy yawned towards the public road. Commodore beckoned Sam. "Le's hitch in de bushes whar de white folks can't see nothin' from de road. Dat's de onliest bad part 'bout dis bizness: white folks is always meddlin'."

Sam followed Commodore, who stopped him at the door and whispered, "Is you got a pistol?" Sam shook his head.

By the light of a smelly lantern Sam saw three negroes on their knees rolling dice across a smooth space, patted down in the dust. None of them looked up; he couldn't see their faces. "Two dollars I shoot." The little slim negro slapped the ground with his palm. "You'se a short

hoss; I comes here to *gamble*—nothin' less dan five."

Commodore nudged Sam. "Dat's de way I loves to hear 'em talk."

Sam got excited, but Commodore seemed to be in no hurry—nonchalantly edged around the ring and squeezed in on his knees. Two men grudgingly made room for him without taking their eyes off the dice. Sam kept close watch of the rolling bones and didn't hear Commodore whisper: "He's got plenty money—no pistol."

When the dice came his way Commodore skinned out a bill. "Five I shoot."

"Got you faded." "Got you faded." Two men spoke together.

"All right, I'll take bofe of you." It was splendid to see.

Sam leaned forward with eyes bulging. Commodore blew on the dice and rolled them out. Four and one. "Huh," Sam grunted to himself, "he aint gwine to make dat five." No sooner did he think it than Commodore threw a seven and lost. Sam gasped. Commodore looked up with a grin; then Sam understood—he was letting those producers win. The man to Commodore's left took up the dice, and Commodore dropped another five; and won five from the man opposite. Presently the dice came back to him. "Five I shoot."

"Huh, you'se scared."

Commodore bristled up. "Here's a five fer every one o' you niggers—and *den* some." The money went up, and before Sam could blink Commodore threw eleven, and won,—seven, and won again. Then he lost a five and let the dice pass on. Evidently the sport did not mean to win every shot or his suckers would quit him. Being on the inside, Sam chuckled to himself.

Unconsciously Sam dropped to one knee and craned his neck over Commodore's shoulder; the sport kept raking in money as fast as he dared, without breaking up a mighty good game. Sam wiggled forward, crowded and wiggled until he wedged himself into the ring, both knees and hands on the ground, watching the bones. Commodore won five, ten, twenty at a throw; then he whispered to Sam, "I'm gwine to lay off a time or two; you better git some o' dis money befo' de well

runs dry." Sam opened his wallet, shot for five and won—so quickly it made his head swim.

"Shoot again." Commodore had picked up the dice, and was rubbing them in his hands, by which means that dumpy sport could make Sam throw almost anything he liked. Sam shot another five and won; a third five and lost.

"Dat's de way to do 't." Commodore patted him on the shoulder. Sam lost his winnings while the dice were passing round, and a second five with it, which put him five dollars loser. He squirmed and waited until the dice got back.

"Hit 'em lively dis time," said Commodore as he blew on the dice for luck.

"I shoots fer five," Sam proclaimed.

"Got you." "Got you." "Got you."

Three men planked down their money and Sam covered it with fifteen dollars. He rolled the bones, came out on "craps," lost, and stared at Commodore. The dumpy sport looked bewildered. Sam now had fifteen dollars left. His empty wallet lay on the ground.

When Sam's turn came again he rolled for five dollars, and came out six and tray.

"Twenty-five to ten you can't make dat nine." That little weazened gambler spoke mighty contemptuous, and flaunted twenty-five in Sam's face.

Sam shook his head. "Dat's all I got left—dis ten dollars."

"Dat's *all* you got? Commo' said you had plenty."

Commodore snatched up the wallet, and dropped the empty thing disgustedly.

Levi—the one-eyed gambler—sat back on his haunches. "I thought you *had* some money. Here's forty to yo' ten you can't make dat p'int."

"Take him," whispered Commodore. Sam noticed that Commodore was shifting the dice to that infallible pair, yet he hesitated. Commodore nudged him and whispered again: "Dat'll put you winner."

Fifty dollars up looked mighty tempting. Sam added his last ten, and backed off to give his arm free swing. Then he rolled the dice and fell off. Levi grabbed the money, and Sam grabbed his hand, yelling: "You niggers is been cheatin' me."

The slim gambler sprang up behind Sunlover and struck him over the head with a wagon spoke. Sam felt the hot blood streaming down his neck; it maddened him. He whirled and snatched the spoke; but didn't let go of Levi or the money. Sunlover struggled to his feet with both negroes clinging to him, wrenched himself free and lifted the wagon spoke. He smiled to see a pistol come out from under Commodore's coat—his friend was protecting him. But there was a glitter in Commodore's eye which made Sam hurl the two men from him, and spring upon the gambler with the gun—so swiftly that he caught the weapon as it went off—a blinding flash in his eyes. A scorching wound grazed Sunlover's forehead; he fell heavily forward. Commodore kicked over the lantern; everybody broke through the door.

The wounded man roused himself; the lantern had not yet gone out. He was alone, dazed and bleeding. Instinctively he set the lantern straight. Something buzzed in his head; horses went galloping towards the town; he sat up mumbling: "Dem niggers robbed me."

Sunlover still clutched that pistol by the barrel; yonder lay the wagon spoke; here was the empty wallet—there the patted space in the dirt. It seemed very clear to him now. Mechanically he picked up the wallet and thrust it into his breast. "Den dey tried to kill me on top o' dat." Fury choked him; he rushed out with the wagon spoke in one hand, the pistol in the other. The far away clatter of hoofs crossed a bridge.

His gray mare whickered; it sounded mighty friendly. "I reckon I better go home an' git sumpin' did fer dis head."

Sunlover slipped the pistol in his pocket and held to the spoke while he unhitched his horse and took the big road again—with a dollar and fifteen cents, a fact which hurt more than the head.

The mare bounded homeward; it was long past her feeding time. Sam's thoughts raced on in advance. "Dat ole Cynthia 'Riah, she'll set dar till nex' year at fo' o'clock." His head ached at the dread of it. That wagon spoke had stirred Sam's brain; he thought in flashes. "Ef dem niggers had tuk de money away

from me in de big road dat would ha' been all right. Cynthy 'Riah couldn't say nothin'." Sam jerked up the mare, stood still, and thought. Sam was 'bliged to think.

Turner's bottom was low and dark. In overflow times the creek left a deposit of sand along the road. Sam pulled his horse to the right, up the hill, through a glade of sweet gums, and hitched. Back he ran, amongst the gullies, and shucked his coat. Then he folded that coat with great precision so he could see the impression of the long red wallet. Placing this against the bank, Sam got down on his knees before it, took deliberate aim and fired a ball into the middle of his wallet; immediately two other shots rang out, fired into the air. Sam moved swiftly now—erratic as a bat, but with definite method. First he laid the wallet in an open space where it could not fail to be seen, put on his coat as he ran, unhitched the mare and led her back to the road. A couple of whacks from the spoke started the empty jumper homeward in a gallop. Then Sam opened his mouth in a blood-curdling series of yells, and commenced running after the mare. He crossed the bridge and dropped that pistol in a deep pool.

The night had turned off cold, which drove Cynthy 'Riah inside to the stove. Tildy, Reeny and other leaders of the 'norary faction gathered round to help low-rate the absent brother. Many times Cynthy 'Riah waddled out to the front gallery and gazed towards town. "I tole you so; dat nigger aint *never* comin' back. Name o' Heaven! What's dat?"

Everybody heard the rattle of wheels, and everybody crowded to the gallery. The gray mare was coming—coming like a ghostly streak; men ran into the road to head her off. "It's Sam; it's Sam!" they shouted, then dodged out of the way. She darted across the yellow streak of light, wheeled into the old gin shed and stood trembling.

"Less go see what happened to Sam!" Rufe Batts called excitedly; and the negroes started. They hadn't far to run, for Sam was coming, and coming mighty fast: "Lawd, Sam, what's de matter?"

"Got shot! Got robbed! He'p me to de sto'; run fer de doctor." Sam tumbled up the steps and fell in a huddle under the glare of a huge oil lamp. He lay and gasped, his face smeared with blood. The young planter knelt beside him. "What's the matter, Sam?" he asked.

"Dey shot me! Dey shot me!"

"Stand back men, give him air! Rufe, telephone for Doctor Crandall." Mr. Will eased the injured man and examined his wounds. "Water! Here Rufe, hold his head." After a superficial washing the planter rose, greatly relieved, and announced, "His skull is not fractured."

"Mr. Will," suggested Rufe, "dere's a hole in his coat."

"Looks like a bullet hole!" The planter hurriedly unbuttoned Sam's coat and vest, and tore open the shirt. "Good! It didn't go through."

Doctor Crandall found the victim propped up on a mattress near the stove. "This seems to be a gunshot wound; grazed the forehead; that one behind the right ear is a contusion. Sam, did anybody strike you?"

"Yas suh, feller knocked me in de head. De fust fire hit me right here," touching his breast.

Mr. Will re-examined the coat and stuck his finger through that bullet hole. "Here it is: the ball went through his breast pocket but did not penetrate the lining. Sam, did you have anything in this pocket?"

"Nothin' 'cept dat long red pocket book wid de money in it."

"That money did some good after all."

"Didn't do dat money no good," snorted Cynthy 'Riah.

"Dar now, bless Gawd! *All* de church money gone," Sister Tildy shrieked.

Sam lifted his head. "Aint I tole you niggers not to send me to town on a Friday; hit's a onlucky day."

"How did it happen, Sam?"

"Tuk place mighty brief, Mister Will. I was ridin' 'long through Turner's Bottom, not studyin' no kind o' devilment, when a feller grabbed holt o' my hoss an' say, 'Hans up!' I say, 'What fer?' an' wuz jes fixin' to jump on top o' him when he made dat fust fire. Peared like dat ball hit me in de breas', an' jarred mightily. 'What you mean shootin' me like dat?"

I say, an' throwed one foot outen de jumper. Den he make two mo' fires; an' at de same time another feller lammed me side de head wid a stick. Co'se I didn't see nothin' 'cept stars, whilst dem men dragged me outen de jumper an' tuk dat pocket-book."

"How many were there?" Mr. Will questioned.

"'Bout fo' er five 'g'inst me one."

"Doctor, how long will it be before Sam is able to walk? I want him to show me where this hold-up occurred."

"I kin go right now!" Sam got up and started, being anxious for some responsible person to find that pocket-book.

"Rufe, you boys get out the lanterns, and light up."

A torch-light procession of men and women and lanterns hurried away from the plantation store in the direction of Turner's Bottom. The negroes talked in whispers and Cynthy 'Riah kept shaking her head.

"Now boys," said Mr. Will, "before we get to the place everybody must stop, except the Doctor, Sam and myself. Don't make too many tracks in the road."

Sam could not have arranged it better. Presently he turned. "All you niggers stop right here; yonder's de place." The two white men and the negro went groping forward, each with a lantern searching the ground.

"Here's de very place," Sam announced.

"Yes, and here's the stick." The doctor stooped and picked up a wagon spoke. "Just the instrument to produce that contused wound. Now Sam, which way did those men go?"

"Up yonder way." Sam led them aside from the road, up the dry bed of a gully.

It was not Sam who called attention to that wallet lying in plain view; but it was his lantern that first threw a gleam of light upon it. The boss sprang forward. "By Jinks," he cried, "here's the pocket-book. Got a bullet sticking in it. I'm going back to the store and telephone for Buck Hines to put his dog on this trail before it gets cold." Sam grew pale around the gills when he heard that, and kept close to Mr. Will.

The huddle of negroes in the road parted to let the white men and Sam pass

through. Cynthy 'Riah puffed and panted beside the boss. "Mister Will," she questioned, "did y'all find de church money?"

"No, we found the spoke that knocked Sam in the head—and the purse."

"Was the money in it? Dat's all I wants to know."

"Haven't opened it yet."

"I'm gwine to be right dar when you does open it."

Cynthy 'Riah climbed the store steps and squeezed in next to the boss when he took out the pocket-book; negroes pushed and shoved, but nothing could budge Cynthy 'Riah. The boss and the doctor faced each other; Cynthy 'Riah blocked one side and kept three slim negroes from seeing anything. Sunlover Sam peered over the boss' shoulder as the white men carefully examined the book. "Mister Will," Cynthy 'Riah pleaded, "befo' y'all opens dat pocket-book, please suh lemme have it. Thankee suh."

Just as the doctor and Mr. Will had done, Cynthy 'Riah turned it over and over in her big, fat hand; she looked at the back end of the bullet on one side, and the nose of it just poking through on the other. "Well, dars *one* thing sertain *sho*. 'Taint nothin' been tuk out o' dat pocket-book sence dat bullet was shot in it."

"By Jinks!" exclaimed the planter. "That's so, isn't it, Doc?"

"Sure! Never thought of that." The two white men bent their heads together and re-examined the wallet. Sunlover took one preparatory step, backward into the shadow. Doctor Crandall spoke rapidly: "Sam had that book in his pocket; the ball struck it and stopped. Those robbers snatched the book and ran. Naturally they would take out the money and throw the book away. The book hasn't been opened. The money *must* be there. Good!"

That swarm of negroes never buzzed while Mr. Will unstrapped the rubber band and opened the wallet, disturbing its contents as little as possible. "Here are the canceled checks, and something that looks like a bank statement."

"No money?" the doctor inquired.

"No money, Sam!" Mr. Will turned to Sunlover for an explanation. "Where is Sam?"



Sam grabbed his hand, yelling: "You niggers is been cheatin' me." . . . The slim gambler sprang up behind Sunlover and struck him over the head with a wagon-spoke.

"Where is Sam?" Doctor Crandall repeated, looking amongst the negroes.

"Whar you Sam? Whar you Sam?" The tremendous bulk of Cynthy 'Riah took a sudden notion to revolve, and bumped Sis Tildy against the counter. "Whar you Sam?"

A scared boy spoke up: "Mister Sam jes stepped out de back do'."

Sam stepped very softly, very lightly out of that back door. Then he kept on stepping. He stepped right peart across the pasture lot, and the ex-treasurer's tracks were mighty far apart when he hit the open field. Without looking behind him he tumbled over a fence and plunged into the bushes.

The path to Daddy Peter's was very faint; few men traveled it in the daytime; and none dared go by night to the hoodoo man's cabin. Its palsied chimney of mud-and-sticks required a long pole to brace it up, looking very like the rickety old Daddy himself leaning upon his staff. The roof sagged, and so did Daddy Peter's back. Sam trembled as he touched the door. It squeaked, and a squeaky voice bade him enter. The ashen-black creature sat before his fire-place, staring into black-gray ashes.

"I wants a runnin' han'!" Sam blurted out breathlessly.

"Here 'tis all ready fer you." Daddy Peter shoved out a curious little cloth bag no bigger than a hickory nut—tightly stuffed and tied with horse hair.

Sam gasped, "How'd you know what I wanted?"

"How come I knows *ev'rythin'?*"

Sam leaned forward with shaky forefinger, and Daddy drew back his talisman. "Don't you tech it; t'wont be no count ef you puts yo' han' on it befo' you pays."

"How much?"

"Two dollars—cash."

Sam searched his pockets and began to parley. "What you got in it?"

"Dat's fer me to know an' fer you to find out."

"Is it a good un?"

"Sholy. Wid dis in yo' lef' pocket; an' red pepper in yo' shoes, nothin' can't ketch you—nothin' what goes on wings or legs, or runs wid wheels—nothin' in de water, nor yit on de dry lan'."

"Dat's zackly what I needs; ef I takes a notion to run I don't want nobody fetchin' me back."

The ancient creature chuckled: "Is you heerd o' anybody ketchin' Wes Gunn? Buck Hines an' his dog to boot—dey aint never cotch hide nor hair o' Wes Gunn."

"Dat's so; but Daddy, I only got a dollar an' fifteen cents."

"Gimme dat; an' git as fer as you kin quick as you kin. Pull down a pod o' dat red pepper from de string above yo' head."

Sam stepped out of that door, and kept stepping until he struck the river just below Morgan's Ferry. Once in a while he paused to listen for the bay of Buck Hines' dog. Stealing a fisherman's dugout, he was in the act of shoving off. "Huh!" he muttered, "I forgot." Then he sat down, broke the pepper pod and put half in each shoe. "Now den, taint nothin' kin ketch me on de water, nor yit on de lan'."

Deftly the ex-treasurer balanced himself in the treacherous craft and dipped his paddle deep. One strong back stroke threw him clear of the underbrush. The dugout whirled, faced the dark river, and went slipping away—a shadow amongst the shadows.

**"THE Scarface Company," another story of Sun-lover Sam, will be in the April RED BOOK.**

# Good Old Apple Slump

BY A. AND RALPH BERGENGREN



ILLUSTRATED BY REA IRVIN

**A**S the late afternoon train drew in at the Newport station, Professor and Mrs. Coolidge gathered their suit-case and hand bag together and looked hopefully from the car window. But no familiar face greeted them. It was before the "season;" a few early fashionables poured from the train and scattered to traps and motors, leaving the Coolidges, distinguished but *not* fashionable, just where the train had deposited them.

"Ned," said Mrs. Coolidge, "didn't you say William Augustus Tyson was coming to meet us?"

"So I understood him, Lucy."

"Was Mrs. Tyson with him—at Cambridge—when he invited us?" Mrs. Coolidge knew that exact observation in scientific matters did not mean that her husband was equally accurate in social engagements. "If she hadn't written me herself, naming this especial Sunday, I should suspect that you and William Augustus had bungled it between you."

"We might have," admitted the professor. "Anyway I know where the house is and I dare say we can get some kind of a conveyance. I'll ask this footman."

The footman in question was advancing automatically. He stopped automat-

ically, touched his hat, and spoke before Dr. Coolidge had formulated his question.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said, "Dr. Coolidge, sir?"

Dr. Coolidge admitted it. He surveyed the footman with a somewhat quizzical expression. Strange things, he knew, were to be expected of his lifelong friend, William Augustus Tyson, since his recent marriage, and doubtless a footman who represented more than Dr. Tyson's yearly professorial income, was one of them. "Are you from Dr. Tyson?" he asked.

"From Mrs. Tyson, sir. Let me take your wraps, sir. Your boxes will follow by our station wagon, sir." And he swept them along the platform into a limousine. The door closed with a polite slam and left them picturing their one small steamer trunk following them gloriously in "our station wagon." And instead of turning in the direction that Dr. Coolidge's eye had instinctively taken when he thought of the old colonial cottage in which he and William Augustus had sometimes spent the holidays, the limousine sped, as if by force of gravity, toward the very center of social magnificence. Inside the car, the Coolidges wore the expression of persons who are being

abducted but are not quite sure of it. Presently the car stopped and the door opened simultaneously. The splendid footman had risked his valuable life leaping from his seat to do it.

"There is evidently some mistake," exclaimed Mrs. Coolidge. "We are visiting Dr. William Tyson at a Colonial estate outside Newport."

"No mistake, madame," said the footman impenetrably. "It is quite correct. Dr. Tyson resides during the season in Newport since his marriage. This is Mrs. Tyson's estate. Madame is expecting you."

"Oh, very well." Mrs. Coolidge might feel abducted but she knew how to speak to footmen. The doctor's eye twinkled at the easy dignity with which she both descended and condescended. Nor was the doctor afraid of footmen.

It was their own hospitable custom to meet guests at the station; or, at worst, on the threshold of their own home. But here the massive door, with the armorial carving that perhaps explained how Dr. Tyson had come to marry so much money, opened under the hands of still another splendid menial. He consigned the Coolidges, somewhat as if they had been two superior express parcels, to a maid; and the maid led them to a suite of rooms and departed. Doubtless there were Tysons, but they remained invisible. It was an impressive, if not over-heated reception. Mrs. Coolidge sat down on the lace counterpane expanded on a carved Renaissance bedstead. The doctor curiously examined the luxury that surrounded him.

"This comes of visiting a woman you don't know," remarked Mrs. Coolidge. "Who on earth did William Augustus marry? We were in Japan at the time, Ned."

"I don't know exactly. New Yorker of some sort. Pork, wheat, cotton—surely something that pays better than science. My dear, that bath-tub suggests in design and luxuriance some fragments of ancient royalty that I once picked up in Pompeii! No wonder, if William Augustus takes a bath every morning in spiced and perfumed water, that he seemed foggy about *ephyromedusa* when we met in Cambridge."

A knock on the door interrupted him and announced a French maid, horrified, apparently, to see the doctor out of his own room of the suite. She "begged pardon," and was about to back out again.

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Coolidge, summoning her best manner with her own simpler domestics. "I shall want my bag at once, please."

"Sairtainlee, Madame. It ees here outside. Din-nair at eight. Your boxes have not yet come. What can I do for Madame meanwhile. Or perhaps Madame will prefair that I come in lair, lay out her toilette articles, and do her hair?"



A fat Frenchman talked excitedly with William Augustus Tyson.

Toilette articles indeed! Dr. and Mrs. Coolidge had each brought a nice, clean comb and brush and a tooth-brush. Dr. Coolidge had his shaving things; and between them they had a small manicure set.

"Thank you," replied Mrs. Coolidge. "But I can't endure to have my head touched except by my own maid. As I have not brought her with me, I'll see what I can do for myself. I'll ring when I want you." The maid vanished and Mrs. Coolidge stared at her husband. "Din-nair at eight!" she echoed. "I suppose you realize, Ned, that these people will dress for dinner every night—and change half a dozen times a day?"

"Very likely," admitted Dr. Coolidge cheerfully. "But clothes don't make the

man, Lucy. And I've known Tyson longer than the present Mrs. Tyson has."

"You haven't known him *since* the present Mrs. Tyson has," said Mrs. Coolidge flatly. "And clothes do make the *woman*—in Newport. I'm sorry we came, Ned. I've a strong premonition—"

"So have I, my dear. We won't like Mrs. Tyson. And I only hope we'll be able to conceal it for Will's sake. He was always a little of a butterfly—and this marriage—Well, we're here and we have to make the best we can of it. They can't eat us."

"It's only over Sunday," said Mrs. Coolidge hopefully. "And *before* the season. I wonder—"

The evening passed heavily, Dr. and Mrs. Coolidge in the best that the steamer trunk afforded, a best intended for the informal simplicity of that old Colonial cottage, and their host and hostess in the full dress of ceremony. Once there had been much in common between Ned Coolidge and Billy Tyson; but there could never have been much in common between their wives. And the visitor's intuitive suspicion had been all too well founded; only *before* the season would this visit have been permitted. William Augustus' wife visibly took no pleasure in entertaining these old friends of her husband, nor had she the good breeding to succeed in concealing it. She entertained under protest—and even Dr. Coolidge's smile gradually became somewhat acid. Nor had William Augustus' frequent reference to "Mrs. Tyson's car," "Mrs. Tyson's orchids," and "Mrs. Tyson's opera box," helped matters; for the pride he took in his wife's possessions only emphasized a side of his old friend's nature that Dr. Coolidge had always glanced quickly away from. And the doctor's smile became still more sardonic when Mrs. Tyson patronized science.

"Of course," she said, "it was pleasant for William to have such an interesting plaything."

Before the evening was over there was nothing to talk about but gastronomy and the achievements of "Mrs. Tyson's chef." The proposal of a late supper seemed only an unnecessary prolongation of the general agony. But William Augustus

was still trying desperately to be jovial.

"Come, Ned," he insisted, "just for the sake of old times when we were never without our appetites. Name something. Mrs. Tyson's chef—"

"Don't urge the Professor," said Madame, looking both bored and sleepy. "Very likely he is not used to our late hours."

Dr. Coolidge's smile suddenly lost its acidity. It became genial as if suddenly inspired with an appetizing idea.

"You phrase it to a nicety, Mrs. Tyson," he replied, as if deeply obliged to her. "My brain is rather more used to late hours than my stomach. And yet, perhaps—but I hardly think Gaston could manage—"

"Manage!" echoed Dr. Tyson, delighted at the thought of gratifying anybody in the jaded company. "Why, of course he can manage. Out with it, Ned."

"Well, in that case, Willie, suppose we have him make us a good old Apple Slump. Such as you and I used to gobble down at Andy Mill's grandmother's. You haven't forgotten old Mrs. Mill's big farm house near Westerly? And her Rhode Island johnny cake! And above all things—her Apple Slump!"

Dr. Tyson's thin face fell into lines of care and apprehension. Here was Coolidge asking the impossible. And with a thousand other things to choose from!

"Apple *what*?" asked Mrs. Tyson.

"Slump—with cream," said the doctor, with the seriousness of a connoisseur.

"An old-time Rhode Island dish, Isabel," hurried in Dr. Tyson, "famous up country during our college days. Dr. Coolidge and I used to visit a classmate at his grandmother's and eat to bursting of it."

"I don't doubt it's very nice," murmured Mrs. Tyson, "but can Gaston make it so late at night?"

"Hardly," said Dr. Coolidge regretfully. "It seems to me, if I remember, that it took Mrs. Mills half a day."

"Then, if you don't mind, we'll wait till morning." Mrs. Tyson got up, summarily finishing the question for the night and sending her guests bedward.

Next morning before breakfast the French maid appeared at Mrs. Coolidge's door, knocking gently.

"Par-don these disturbance to your rest, Madame, but—but we air in great trouble," she explained helplessly.

Mrs. Coolidge sat up in bed.

"Trouble! What kind? Is anybody ill?"

"*Non*, Madame. Worse!"

"Worse?"

"But yess! Gaston ees impatient."

"Well, what's he impatient about? Us? Is he going to leave the house because there's company?"

"*Non! non!* You meestake, Madame. It ees zee Apple—Ah! I know not zee English."

"Oh, the Apple Slump." Mrs. Coolidge remembered. "Can't he make it? Tell him not to bother. Mr. Coolidge will not mind in the least—"

"Yes, I shall mind, Lucy." The voice came from the next room, where Dr. Coolidge had his quarters; one might almost say it came from directly behind the door. "I don't often get a chance to have any good old Apple Slump. Tell him to send out and ask some of the country neighbors for the recipe. Try the farms."

Mrs. Coolidge interpreted this advice to the maid, and looked reproachfully at her husband as the door closed behind the domestic and another opened to reveal the professor in his pale blue pajamas.

"Are you bent upon making trouble in this house?" she asked earnestly.

"*Non! non!*" replied the doctor, dancing daintily in his pajamas. "But I muss haf amuse! Zee entire day I muss pass, and I haf not zee plaything science to amuse with. Unless I am mistaken," he added delightedly, "Mrs. Tyson's chef is now discussing Apple Slump with Mrs. Tyson's husband directly under our window." And he beckoned his wife to join him.

On the lawn a fat Frenchman, with a barrel-shaped waist and a sleek head that rolled on his plump neck like a billiard ball, talked excitedly with William Augustus Tyson, informally arrayed in a dressing gown. And the eye of this Frenchman blazed like a kitchen fire. Dr. Tyson, facing "Mrs. Tyson's chef," seemed to be on the defensive.

"But I assure you, Gaston," he was saying, waving the tassel of his dressing

gown, "we none of us know how to make it—"

Gaston waved his hands and wiggled his fingers.

"Eet ees to—what you call—'stomp!'" he reiterated. "To stomp zee arteeste! To demand of heem what he muss fall down upon! I go! These minutes! *Après moi le loogage!*"

"Gaston," said Dr. Tyson desperately, "nobody is trying to stump you. Good heavens! why *should* anybody try to stump you? Mrs. Tyson is giving a dinner party next week—and that ought to prove that we are not likely to—er—to attempt humor with your professional dignity. If any of us knew *how* to make Apple Slump—"

"Then," said Gaston with dignity, "eet ees *up*, as you call heem, up to Madame to discovair. I make zee accurrst Slomp—or I go."

"Of course you'll make it," propitiated Dr. Tyson. "And to get you the recipe I'm going to start every man on the place to find somebody who does know how to make it."

It was a serious matter, but at breakfast Dr. Tyson partly succeeded in describing the scene jocularly, for an upward glance had shown him faces at the guest chamber window. But there was no jocularity in the face of Mrs. Tyson.

"The question *now*," she said grimly, "is how we're going to get rid of the day with all the cars hunting old women who know how to make Dr. Coolidge's favorite dish. I *can't* leave the place myself with Gaston in such a state—"

"Nor can I, Mrs. Tyson," protested Dr. Coolidge. "Innocent cause of Gaston's perturbation, I feel that I ought to stay here and act as interpreter."

One by one during the morning, local countrywomen, wearing puzzled countenances and their best Sunday clothes, were driven up to the kitchen door. Dr. Coolidge met them, turning a critical but genial smile of introduction from each one to Gaston, who sat firmly on a chair under an apple tree and smoked innumerable cigarettes. Most of them had *heard* of Apple Slump; some had eaten it: one boasted of having the recipe—somewhere—but where was a question that she left on the knees of the gods for

solution. Late in the morning, one admitted that she had a sister who was a great hand at Apple Slump.

"Produce her!" cried Dr. Coolidge, turning to Gaston, whose warm friendship he seemed to be making by his casual knowledge of hot French expletives. "*Allons! Gaston! It is here! Discovered!*"

"*Hein!*" exclaimed Gaston, voicing

me," interposed the doctor. "Where can we find your sister, Madam?"

"In heaven," replied the native solemnly. "She's been dead these fifteen years."

The day wore on slumplessly. Gaston changed his clothes. He appeared in the library, superbly cool and unimpassioned, restored by lapse of time to his national *je ne sais quoi*. The guests were theoretically enjoying afternoon tea, the only



Gaston sat firmly on a chair under an apple tree and smoked innumerable cigarettes.

his delight in untranslatable French to the effect that she should at once spit it out or die.

"He's a furriner!" remarked the native contemptuously. "I don't have no words with Portugee or Polack."

"*Moi—Portugee!*" replied Gaston emphatically. "*Sacre bleu! Femme de chien!*"

"Pshaw, Gaston. She is referring to

meal of which they now felt any certainty.

"Do I understand that you really mean to leave me because of this trifle, Gaston?" demanded Mrs. Tyson icily.

"*Oui, Madame.*"

"You understand of course, by this time, that none of us had any desire to 'stump' you. You must see that, Gaston."

"*Oui, Madame.* But I haf been upset.

Zee nature of zee arteeste—zee temperament—"

What Gaston was about to say of the temperament of the artist was interrupted by the sudden arrival of William Augus-

announced happily. "She's deaf as a post." He raised his voice. "Now, Mrs. Almy, tell this man how to make Apple Slump."

Mrs. Almy seemed surprised at her



An old crone . . . who says she's made it ever since she can remember.

tus. An old crone who had been hurried in by one of the footmen accompanied him. Evidently in the crisis of the moment he had pursued Gaston straight to the drawing room. He was jubilant.

"Here's an old woman who says she's made it ever since she can remember," he

own importance, but she did not manifest any embarrassment despite her obvious failure to understand the general perturbation of the company into which she had been carried.

"You makes a good crust," she began in the loud voice of those who are very

hard of hearing. "Some uses lard, some butter. First, o' course, you've got to peel your apples an' cut 'em up, an' season. Dump 'em on the crust spread over a pie plate and—" She stopped and looked more perplexed than ever. "I'm mighty hard o' hearin'," she added, "but I never heard o' anybody as could cook as didn't know how to make apple pie."

"Pie!" echoed William Augustus.

"Pie!" exclaimed Gaston. "Zee pastry of apple. Behold! Who excels like Gaston?" He looked wildly from one to another. "But zee Slomp?"

It was a tense moment. Much hung on it—the dignity of Gaston, the future of Mrs. Tyson's dinner party, the possibility of carrying Dr. Coolidge's revenge to an awful conclusion. Dr. Coolidge smiled quizzically, but without acid—the smile of a man who is content with what he has accomplished.

"Slump?" he repeated with a puzzled expression. "Gaston, is it possible that you did not know that Slump is another

name for pie? Ah, make me a pie of the apple, and I will die happy."

"That does not stomp!" said Gaston delightedly. "Slomp—pie: pie—slomp. Zee slomp of apple and zee pie of apple. Zey are twins, *hein!*" He turned toward Mrs. Tyson. "But I haf been opset, Madame. Zee temperament of zee arteeste—"

"Oh, anything in reason to recompense the temperament of the artist," replied Mrs. Tyson with an air of relief. "I suppose now we can count upon you to prepare dinner."

"But yess!" replied Gaston, "wiz zee slomp of apple."

"If worst *had* come to worst, Lucy," said Dr. Coolidge as they were conveyed to the train next morning, "I could have saved Gaston's temperament by telling him how to make good old Apple Slump myself. But Gaston's pie with cream on it was a pretty good substitute. And it takes temperament to whip cream."



# ARIZONA AL

by MICHAEL  
WILLIAMS

Author of "Jerry Gallagher," etc.

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ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY M. ARTHURS

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**F**IVE men were playing poker in a small, overheated room at the back of a roadside saloon outside a small New Jersey town.

A wild March wind was gustily whimpering and howling, and now and then slashes of sleety rain attacked the heavily curtained window.

The gas jets were flares of murky crimson in the dense cloud of acrid tobacco smoke. Fumes of coal gas from the leaky stove made the vitiated air still more fetid. From time to time the players administered to themselves doses of the adulterated drinks sold under the name of beer and whisky in the adjacent saloon. But they did not seem to be affected, for the stronger and subtler toxemia of the gambling fever rendered them oblivious of lesser corruptions of body and mind.

During by far the most of their time, they were servants of the daily, humdrum necessities of workaday life,—one being a barber, another a boss carpenter, another a blacksmith, another a livery-stable keeper, and the fifth a house painter,—but in this room they were aware of themselves as free individuals breathing the exhilarating atmosphere of the enchanted region of "sport." They called themselves the Stubbsville Pastime Club, and besides poker and pinochle, they "played the ponies," they got up

"smoke talks" and boxing bouts, and were experts in the great national game of newspaper baseball.

For one of the five—for Allan Davis, the painter, "Arizona Al," as he was called—the excitement, the chance and conflict, the thrill and charm of all this, and especially of poker playing, evoked a sort of mental mirage in which he sought to realize the desire of his heart for a career of adventure and romance. He was known as "a dead game sport," and he played up to the part—but he was really of a fine and almost delicate fiber, with a capacity for sensitive feelings, and was possessor of—or, no, possessed by—a strong imagination which might have been his greatest blessing had it not been too busy in being his greatest curse.

He owed his nickname to its prompting. He had started for Arizona to rustle cattle, or kill Apaches, or rob stages, or to be the sheriff of Tombstone, at the ripe age of thirteen. He only reached Hoboken, however, when the unromantic uncle who was trying to rear him in the ways of the real but stupid world captured him and dragged him back to the paint shop. Ever since then he had continued to dream about Arizona. He was omnivorous in his reading of dime novels and of those factory-manufactured magazines devoted to the exploitation of a wild and woolly West which only exists

in their pages, but it was Arizona that centered Al's dreams. Some day he was going "out there." You bet he was!

Twice Al had actually saved enough money not only to buy a Colt's revolver and a highly expensive Stetson sombrero, but also his ticket. On the first occasion he "got into a little game" at the Club. Next day he pawned the gun and the sombrero and got back his job. On the second occasion, he had met Jeanie Morrison, and his imagination had played him a trick. It persuaded him that love-making and getting married would be the wildest and finest kinds of adventures—especially since Jeanie's elder brother John, "had no use" for Al and tried to interfere. Well, love-making and getting married unquestionably are adventurous matters—but not quite according to Al's scale of values. And now there was an Al Junior, aged five, and a second Jeanie, aged two. But he still meant to reach Arizona. The tedium of Stubbsville life had grown heavier and more hopeless. The Pastime Club was his one escape from it. But Arizona would be achieved! He now couldn't very well go in for being a

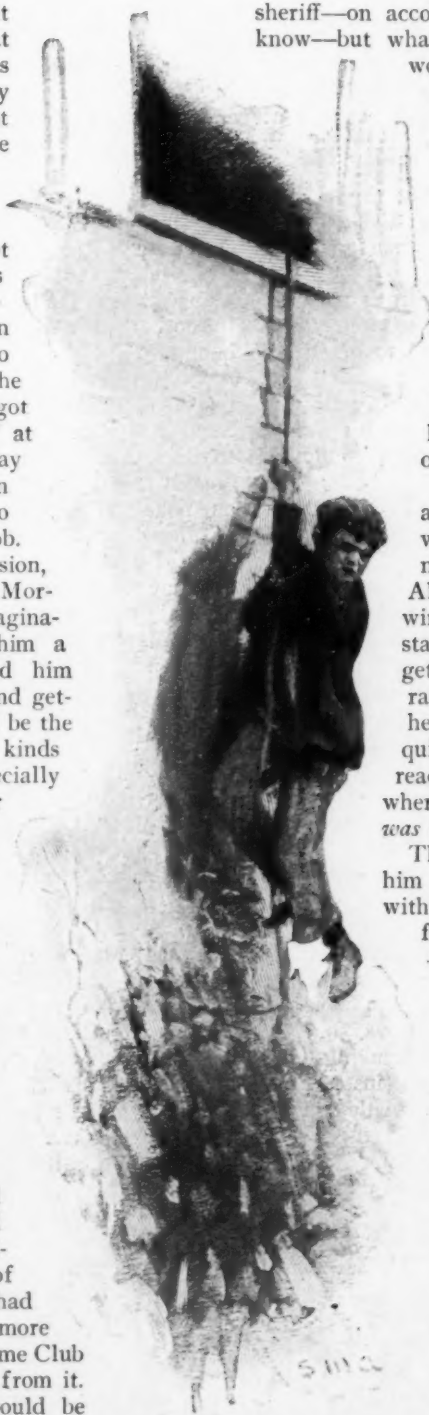
sheriff—on account of the family, you know—but what was the matter with working a bunch of cattle

down somewhere in the San Pedro country, or prospecting until he had struck it rich in copper or gold? He had infected Jeanie with his romantic imaginings, and at first she had been enthusiastic. Nowadays they didn't talk about Arizona. In fact, lately they didn't have much to say to each other on any subject.

But it never got far away from Al's mind. He was thinking about it now, in the poker game. Al was the one who was winning. If only his luck stayed by him, he might get together a start on the raising of the capital that he needed. If so, he would quit the game—until he reached Arizona, anyhow, where they played poker that *was* poker!

This dream was exciting him as he leaned forward with a flush in his lean, eager face and raked toward him the broken chips and coin of a big jackpot. Also, he was warmed by the fascination of the game itself. There never had been stiffer playing in the history of the club. "I'm in the greatest game of my life," thought Al, with deeper truth than he was aware of. MacQueen, the obese saloon-keeper, had waddled in from the bar to watch the play.

"Arizona Al is sure playing some poker!" he wheezed.



He started for Arizona to rustle cattle or rob stage coaches.

"Huh, any mutt could play the cards he's gettin'. Did you ever see such luck? You can't beat it!" broke out Lon Greenwood, the barber, bitterly. He was the heaviest loser; he was peevish; and at no time was there love lost between him and Davis.

"Well, I guess it's about time I had some luck," said Al. "I bet I've dropped more money in this club than any man here!"

Nobody disputed the truth of this, though Greenwood muttered something inaudible which caused Al to glance at him sharply.

A new member of the club, who was also a heavy loser, pulled out his watch.

"I move we have a round of dollar jacks, and quit," said he.

The other players paused and looked doubtful, each one waiting for somebody else to speak.

Al Davis felt his heart stand still during the pause. Swiftly and vividly as a moving picture, a scene flashed before his inner sight, designed and produced by that never-resting, impalpable dramatist which all human brains contain—the image-making faculty which puts our hopes and fears, our desires and our dreams, into form for us—and which was especially active in Allan Davis.

He saw himself going home. Jeanie would be sitting up for him. She always did so, much to his displeasure, but to-night it suited him. He saw her glance at him, doubtingly. He saw himself carelessly yet with a magnificent air throw a roll of bills on the table. Also he could see how glad she was that he was sober—for all night he had been drinking very cautiously, ordering cigars instead of whisky till his pockets bristled with them. He was not only bringing home his wages, intact, but also thirty dollars "velvet." He guessed she'd see that poker wasn't so worse, after all.

Such was Version Number One of the home-coming of Arizona Al, as dramatized by his lively imagination. He soon had cause to construct another.

"Quit at a quarter to twelve?" growled Lon Greenwood, who had glimpsed Al's look of eager hope. "This aint the kindergarten class, is it?"

"Well, gents, it's Saturday night,"

said the player who had made the proposal. He was the new foreman of the blacksmith shop at the boiler works, a big, even-tempered, quiet, thoroughly independent man.

"What's that got to do with it?" asked Greenwood.

"Well, it'll be Sunday in a quarter of an hour," answered the blacksmith.

"Sunday! Gee, this aint no Sunday-school class, is it?" cried the barber. He glanced about the table sardonically, and the other players grinned as in duty bound.

"You gents do what you like," said the blacksmith calmly. "I don't care about Sunday any more'n you do, if it comes to that; but the missus belongs to the church and I gives her my word to cut out poker on Sundays. She don't butt in at other times. An' when I says I'll do a thing, I does it. That's me. So you gents do what you like. I quit at twelve sharp."

Again there was a hesitant pause. The other players were puzzled. They knew the proper thing to do. The proper thing to do was to laugh to scorn this weak brother who actually talked about his promises to his church-going wife at a session of the Stubbsville Pastime Club. They knew they ought to "jolly the life out of him." Only—nobody wanted to "start something" with the smith. He had arms whose mere weight shook the table.

Arizona Al was especially nonplused. The dead-game sport in his composition sneered in a mental whisper that the smith was "soft in the head, for fair" to let his wife interfere with him. And telling everybody about it, too. Gee whiz, what an easy mark! Al could understand a man having the thought of his wife on his mind even in a poker game—but that a sport could calmly say so was beyond his comprehension. It made him feel obscurely angry with the smith. It made the smith seem like a sort of traitor to the whole confraternity of husbands who also were dead game sports.

At the same time, Al couldn't dodge the fact that he envied the smith—envied him, and uneasily respected him. Here was a man who knew his own mind. He said what he thought, no matter who liked it. And did what he wanted to do

without bothering about what other people would think. Also, he evidently possessed that jewel among wives, a wife who was sensible—a wife who didn't butt in all the time, who didn't mind a man having a little fun with his friends. Al thought: "I bet she don't go around the house mopin' and grouchy," as Jeanie did—Jeanie, who hated gambling at any time, in any way, though she no longer dared to say so. But her silence and sadness said it for her.

Her white face and sad eyes rose up before Al. He knew in his heart that she never was "grouchy," as he tried to think she was. If she only were, he could have been more easy in his mind. And again his ever-busy image-maker flashed a scene before his inner sight: Version Number Two of his home-coming. Suppose when he entered the room where she would be awaiting him,—he being sober, as of late he so seldom had been on a Saturday night, and with thirty dollars to the good,—suppose, as he tossed the money, with careless magnificence, on the table, he should say: "Well, Jeanie, here's some of the coin I've dropped in that club—and here's where I quit for good, and start a bank account for the Arizona proposition. How about it, kid?" He thought he could see her white face flash back into its old time rose, the sad eyes brighten, and—

But the picture faded out, swamped beneath a rush of heated, angry feeling that up-boiled in him as Lon Greenwood said with the sneering tone he could use so well:

"If that's how you feel, all right! You're on. Round of dollar jacks, and quit. I guess Arizona Al agrees with you—he wont mind gettin' home to *his* wife before it's Sunday—considering the killin' he's made. How about it, Arizona?"

Leaning forward with a flushed face and a dangerous gleam in his eyes, Al said:

"Here's what I'll do with you, Greenwood. You're lookin' for a chance to get your money back, aint you? Well, I'm no tight-wad, see? We'll boost the limit another dollar. And I'll bet *you* five dollars on the side! On every pot of the round!"

"You're on," said Greenwood, after a flitting hesitation.

"I quit right now," said the blacksmith calmly, rising and putting on his coat. "Cash my chips. I thought we were all working men here, and not millionaires or professional sharps. If this is how you play poker in Stubbsville, count me out."

And amid their silence he quietly said good-night and left the room. Again the swift, involuntary pang of envious respect flashed through Allan Davis. But he did his best to blunt its edge with the acid of a sneer.

"There's some people who want to play poker like it was Old Maid," said Al. The other players laughed.

The cards were dealt again. A last gleam of common sense now illumined Al's mind with a warning suggestion: "Play carefully—trail along and play for safety."

For three hands he obeyed the inward monitor—his "hunch," as he would have called it. He lost two pots and won another without heavy play, and just about "broke even."

Then he himself dealt the fourth pot, which was to be the last. As he picked up his cards, he felt a thrill. He had three queens.

"Here's where I ought to make a little killing—to wind her up," he thought.

"I lift you the limit," said he, when the bet came to him.

The barber smiled—maliciously, deliberately. "The same to you, Arizona," said he.

Whereupon a fever-flush of hot temper swept all caution from Al's mind. Greenwood must have bettered his hand! But maybe he was trying to bluff! He'd get a run for his money, anyhow!

"Two dollars higher," said Al.

"Two more than you," said Greenwood.

"Try it again!" snapped Al.

The other players, together with MacQueen, were leaning forward breathlessly. The barber lost his smile. He glowered at Davis. He palpably hesitated. Al's confidence revived with a rush. Either the barber had been bluffing or else he was going to drop out of it!

But Greenwood did not drop out. He

reluctantly put two more dollars in the pot, and said: "There's no good going up against *your* luck, but I call you, anyhow."

"Three queens," said Al, and reached for the money.

"Hold on!" shouted the barber. "Hold on! I've got a full-house: three jacks and a pair of tens. See?"

It was so.

"*And you called me!*" sneered Al, trying to distill all his boiling rage, smarting disappointment, and leaden dismay into the venom of scorn.

"Say, Greenie," said the man who had opened the pot, "you sure lost your nerve."

"Arizona Al got Lon's goat that time!" chuckled the saloon-keeper.

Davis had lost nearly two-thirds of his winnings at a blow; and the blow was bitterly heavy—but he tasted a tonic recompense in these remarks. His dead-game sportiness had been exalted once again. He was no quitter! He had pretty nearly licked that piker Greenwood to a finish, full-house and all!

"Well," said Greenwood, "well, how could I tell his run of luck was broken?" He looked askance at Davis. "You talked big about givin' me a chance to get back at you," he continued. "Now I'll give you a look in. I guess *we* don't have to quit because it's Sunday."

Something whispered urgently to Al: "Stand by the agreement. You are still ahead of the game."

But he said: "You're on." Turning to MacQueen, he added: "Bring another round of drinks, Mac."

"Sure. What'll you take, Arizona?"

"I'll take a little rye," muttered Al.

And the game went on.

## II

When he woke up, and had puzzled out where he was, he found himself lying fully dressed on his bed at home. It was broad daylight. Church bells were ringing; probably they had awakened him. Confound them! A man after working hard all the week couldn't get any rest even on his day at home! He rolled over and pulled the clothes about his ears, but he could not get to sleep again.

Presently he sat up on the edge of the bed. Remembrance was returning, in fits and starts, with some things dull and misty, and others vivid and sharp. One of the obscure things was the question of how he had come out of the game, financially. His hands slowly and shakingly went through all his pockets. Net result: a crumpled one dollar bill, thirty cents in silver, about twenty cigars, most of them crushed or broken, and a half empty flask of whisky.

So that was it! Why hadn't he quit when he had the hunch to do so? Then he would have been all right. Everything would have been all right. Why *hadn't* he quit?

He sharply, all too sharply, remembered getting home. Very differently had matters turned out from those scenes imagined during the game! Jeanie had been waiting up, fully dressed. She had not said one word. But he had deliberately provoked and forced a quarrel. He had worked himself up into a rage. The frightened crying of the children in the next room, and Jeanie's imploring, "Hush Al! Oh, don't, Al!" still rang in his ears. And he had smashed things. The fragments of a basin and a pitcher which he had hurled on the floor were still there. Never before had he behaved so brutally. What devil had got into him? Al sunk his aching head in his hands and groaned.

But, was he all to blame? What right had Jeanie to—to—

For a while Al could not precisely recall what Jeanie had done to urge him on to this— Well, what right had she to look as if she were being killed, anyhow—just because a man wanted some fun with his friends? And if his luck was bad, was that his fault?

With his aching head clasped by his shaking hands, he sullenly brooded over Jeanie's complete lack of understanding for him, and of her mean way of looking miserable.

All at once it crept upon his attention that the house was very still and quiet. No sounds from the kitchen. No sounds of the children. Had Jeanie taken the children and gone to church? She did so when he did not insist upon having his Sunday dinner at noon.

Humph! How did she know he wouldn't want it at noon to-day? Did she think he wouldn't be *able* to eat? Well, he'd show her! He'd go down to the kitchen and get some bacon and eggs and coffee—strong, black coffee. Ah! that was a good idea. Coffee! That was what he wanted.

And he got to his feet, though still dizzy.

Whereupon, he became aware of the fact that it was not coffee he desired. He did, however, desire something else. A powerful, surging, craving need was at work upon him. The passion to satisfy it made his lips tremble, and his jaws twitch. But he would not give way to it, or think about it, or even admit what it was. He crushed it down with all that was left of his will, and held it back with all of his determination that remained.

He swayed unsteadily out of the room. As he pushed the door open, something white fell to the ground, and he jumped with the shock it gave his poisoned nerves. It was an envelope that had been laid upon the door knob, and it was addressed in Jeanie's handwriting:

"Dear Al."

He opened it, wonderingly, and read:

*Dear Al: I can't stand this any longer. And I can't let the children grow up like this. And you say you don't care! You want to be your own boss, you say. Oh, I just wish you was! As if I ever tried to boss you, Al. I can care for the children, and I will. You know I always kept my word to you and I will keep it now. Good-by, Al, and try for your own sake, but I can't stand it any longer, or let the children.*

Jean.

He lowered the letter. Then he tried to read it again. But the letters had got blurred somehow. What did it mean anyhow? It couldn't mean what it said? Jeanie had left him? Jeanie had cut him out?

Swelling and bursting all bonds, the unnamed, craving desire was at his throat again. He braced himself, as if by a muscular struggle he could still win the victory over it. But all at once he gave it up. He couldn't help it; he wanted to cry; he was obliged to cry; and throw-

ing himself upon the bed he let go and wept with the abandonment of a child, his big body heaving with the convulsive violence of his passion.

"Oh, Jeanie!" he sobbed hoarsely. "I didn't *know* it was as bad as this! I didn't know it was as bad as this! I'm—I'm no good anyhow. I'm no *damn* good," confessed the dead game sport.

### III

But it is notorious that really dead game sports can take a whole lot of punishment and still stay in the ring. "Bad luck," may "put it all over" a dead game sport, but he will come back like—like a dead game sport.

Perhaps if Jeanie had been there to put her arms about the man on the bed when for the time being the child within him was frankly evident, this story would have ended, without the necessity of telling how Arizona Al felt called upon to paint the town of Stubbsville red—and black and blue, and other colors—in order to prove that he was his own boss. But Jean was not there, and it had been Al's vanity that had suffered the worst shock, and which now rallied its defences. Somehow, the thought that Jean could leave him—that Jean had ever felt such a desire—was altogether new. And beneath the wounded vanity, some other feeling was throbbing with pain.

But his unmastered imagination had got busy, and with the freakish, spiteful humor of a wicked fairy it conjured up things that aroused all the stubbornness and evil passion of his nature. It showed him a picture of the Stubbsville Pastime Club discussing, with broad grins, this juicy gossip. Arizona Al's wife had run away from him! She had cut him out!

Al jumped up from the bed. The torrent of cleansing tears was checked before it could wash away the anger and pain and shame in his heart. The reaction carried him back to a hardened state of stubbornness. He now felt ashamed of being ashamed. Suppose the boys of the Club knew that he had cried like a woman! He proceeded to forget it. He put on the stern look of a man to whom the very notion of crying is as foreign as the Chinese language.



He used to play "Wild West" with Al Junior.

And he gave himself aid and comfort by taking a drink. It gagged him, but he forced it down. Presently, he took another. It was easier and much pleasanter the second time. It also seemed to make his thoughts flow easier—the thoughts with which he justified himself to himself.

He reached for one of his Wild West books, and lighted one of his least broken cigars, and prepared to enjoy himself.

Jeanie "had another think coming," if she thought *he* was going to care what she did!

Despite the whisky now working in his veins, it felt chilly in the bed-room, so he proceeded to the kitchen to light a fire in the stove.

In the hallway he stumbled over something and nearly fell down. He gave the obstacle a vicious kick and it coiled itself around his leg and almost tripped him up. It was a raw-hide lariat, made in Arizona—bought by Al from a cowboy in a Wild West show.

His face spasmodically tightened and hardened, in order to check a sudden gush of soft feeling. On Sunday mornings at home, when he had not been drinking the night before, he used to play "Wild West" with Al Junior. Despite her church-going proclivities, Jeanie had never objected to this; indeed, she used to take part in the fun, before matters grew too bad. Wearing his sombrero, and brandishing his empty six-shooter, Al would rescue her most thrillingly from Mexican bandits, or Apaches, to the exquisitely mingled terror and delight of Allan Junior.

Somehow, the cigar did not taste very good; nor did the story hold Al's interest. So he took another drink or two.

But it required a good many drinks to overcome the depression that had settled upon him. Somehow, despite the broad daylight, he felt like a man in a house said to be haunted. He several times caught himself rigidly intent on listening, as if for the sound of footsteps. The

little cottage, indeed, which stood by itself on the edge of a large stretch of pasture land, was steeped in a brooding sense of emptiness and loneliness. It seemed as vacant as a church after the congregation has departed, leaving, however, the sense of ghostly presences.

This feeling grew so intense, indeed, that Arizona Al, whose strong imagination it stimulated to singular efforts, at last recognized that if he "didn't do something" he was going to lose his nerve again, or he would become positively frightened. He discerned that it was necessary for him to get into a rage. He had all along felt a vague yet perversely powerful hope that Jeanie would return after church, but it was well on in the afternoon, and she had not come. He drank what was left of the whisky, and at last felt free from his depression. He was alive again, actively alive. It was "up to him" to do something. And he deliberately rummaged his mind for angry thoughts, and he administered them to his rising temper, as a man might take drink after drink of some maddening drug—as a Malay takes his *bhang* in order to prime himself to run *amok*.

"Here's where I start something," he muttered at last, and arose and put on his hat. "I know where she is,"—even in his thoughts, by this time, he had ceased to use the name, Jeanie,—"*she* is with her mother. I'll go and get her, and them kids, too, and bring them back here where they belong—and I only hope that mealy-mouth brother of hers don't butt in, that's all! I hope *he* don't butt in! I bet he put her up to it, when you get right down to cases! I hope *he* don't butt in."

Which expression of hope, however, was an eighteen carat lie. The truth was the precise opposite. Al wanted to fight. He felt he simply had to fight. But he also felt that he would willingly fight a man, or a regiment of men, rather than stay in his empty home that night and fight its emptiness, and fight down that feeling which threatened to destroy all his gameness—the feeling that he would not name, but which, all the same, he knew for what it was—the inner feeling that he was wrong, and wanted to be right.

He slammed the door shut and hurriedly locked it—as if locking up a dangerous creature behind him. And he started, walking rapidly, for the house where Jeanie's widowed mother and brother lived. He was frowning nervously, and he kept his eyes fixed straight ahead. This was necessary—for he had queer impulses to look quickly backward, as if by doing so he should surprise something, or somebody, trailing him. It was as if something or somebody had slipped out of the empty home behind his back. Al wondered if his drinking had reached the point where a man sees things that aren't there and hears voices that do not speak.

But the sight of the Morrison cottage banished that train of thought. He stopped short for a moment. He braced himself. He felt the liquor fuming in his head, and he wished to show all the calm determination and steadiness of invincible sobriety. Also, he was trying to think up words with a sting in them to say to John Morrison. For a thought that disgusted Al had just occurred to him. It was Sunday—perhaps John Morrison wouldn't scrap on Sunday!

Well, he would soon find out!

He hurried forward to the door, which at the same moment was thrown open, and John Morrison emerged in company with a tall, red-haired man, who was gesticulating with his hat, and talking so vehemently and rapidly that Al thought he had encountered a fellow spirit—a man with half a jag.

The red-haired man, however, was not at all under the influence of Al's brand of intoxicant. He happened to be the new curate of the Episcopal church, a young man whose fervors and enthusiasms had been creating a great deal of interest in Stubbsville. Even the Pastime Club had heard about him, because he held the collegiate championship for shot-putting, and had rowed two winning seasons for Yale. Al did not know him, nor did Al want to know him. It was, however, impossible for Al to keep from knowing the red-headed clergyman, for the latter had made up his mind to know Arizona Al.

"Say, you!" snarled Al, to John Morrison. "Get busy now. Bring out my—"

Mrs. Davis, and the kids, see? I'm going to take them home with me. I don't stand for anything else."

John Morrison leaped forward, but his companion caught his arm.

"Jean isn't here. She's left you—for good. She has left this town."

"I don't believe it!" cried Al.

But he did. Something told him that it was true. And his rage redoubled.

"Yes, it's so," said the clergyman. "Your wife has lost faith in you. She has gone away."

"Don't *you* butt in—Brick-top!" snapped Al. "It's a lie."

"Let me get at him!" shouted John Morrison, furiously. "Let me go! I'll teach him a lesson!"

"Come on!" retorted Al. "That's just what I want."

"Oh, is it, really?" said the clergyman, still holding young Morrison back. "Well, my friend, I agree with you. You need a lesson. I want you to have a good one, while you're about it. So, go ahead—strike Morrison first; I'll witness the assault, and then you can take the consequences."

Al's temper burst all bounds at this. He advanced dangerously.

"I'll take you on, too, Mr. Buttinski!" he shouted.

"You will? Good, very good indeed! A very much better plan!" said the other. "Morrison!" he commanded, "you be the witness. Now, Mr. Arizona Al," he added, "—at your service, my friend."

Without more ado, Al punched swiftly and punched hard at the flaming red head, but his opponent ducked most dexterously, so that the blow glided off without landing heavily. And then the steel-sinewed hands which had broken the shot-putting record and victoriously rowed for Yale grasped Al's arms, and in spite of his infuriated struggles—and Al had plenty of muscle—he was held and shoved irresistibly along the street toward the hurrying figures of John Morrison and a policeman.

Fifteen minutes later the door of a cell in the police station clanged upon Al Davis; he was locked up with what he had tried to lock behind him in his empty home; and through the rest of the day and through the long night that followed, he wrestled with the invisibilities.

He was shaken but unconquered in the morning, when he was arraigned before a magistrate and held to await the action of the Grand Jury, which was not to meet for two weeks. And he was sent in default of bail to the county jail.

#### IV

After a few days of sullen rage and stormy tempests of feelings which rendered thinking impossible, Al sent, through the jailer, whom he knew, and who was inclined to be friendly, a round-about message to MacQueen, the saloon-keeper, that he expected to be bailed out. The only other man in the Pastime Club who had property was Greenwood, the barber.

"There's nothing doing with MacQueen, Al," reported the jailer, some days later. "He's got troubles of his own. That red-head friend of yours raided the place the other night, and caught Mac with the goods on, selling after hours. That red-head is a live wire, even if he is a sky-pilot," continued the jailer. "He belongs to a big family, and has all sorts of pull, and he's going to clean up this county, so they say."

"I can see my finish, if he has pull like that," said Al, in dismay, "—when it comes to the trial."

"That's right, Arizona," said the jailer, with sardonic cheerfulness. "I guess you'll have to do your bit. But it isn't as if it was for something real rotten, like housebreaking, or arson," he added, consolingly. "You let your sporting blood run away with you, that's all."

"I wish I'd got a square show at that red-headed Buttinski, anyhow!" muttered Al.

He lapsed into a state of smoldering wrath. And he perceived that he was a victim. This sky-pilot was going to railroad him into jail. It was a frame-up! He'd get six months, at the least.

And then?

When he came out?

He was done for! This settled matters with Jeanie! She'd never have anything more to do with a man who'd been in prison. Though, of course, that didn't matter—for wasn't he through with her? Of course he was! Al took great pains to prove to himself that he was through with

Jeanie. And his moving-picture imagination got extremely busy in conjuring up what Stubbsville, and the Pastime gang, would do, and say, and look, and think. They wouldn't do a thing to him!

No!

Nothing like that for him! He couldn't stand it. He wouldn't stand for it. He would cut it all out. Now he would do what always he had wanted to do. Arizona for him! He'd sell the cottage furniture, which ought to bring in enough for him to clear up his debts, and have enough left over to get "out there."

It was settled. This was the one way out of all the fuss and misery. Arizona!

Something thrilled within him. The spirit of romance and adventure illuminated the somber cell. The brighter, happier side of his mercurial imagination revived. He saw himself on the desert. He pictured fights with "bad men." He killed rattlesnakes. He prospected for gold. And sending out for his favorite magazines, he steeped himself in their magic.

But—it was queer! Something had weakened this magic. His dreams of Arizona were not wholly satisfying. There was something still wrong—especially by night, when hour after hour he lay sleepless. Then it was as if the thing he had tried to lock behind him in the empty home, but which had followed him, was now in the cell. It haunted him like a ghost that had not wholly assumed a form—like a vague, ambient Presence in the air, which was trying to materialize. It seemed endeavoring to find voice to tell him something important—something which he must heed, or forever after be haunted by it.

But Al would not listen to its faint whisperings. He thrust away the sense of its presence. He had made up his mind. He was his own boss! And he would go to Arizona.

That settled it!

A day or two before the Grand Jury met, he sent for Hank Simmons, the local auctioneer and house agent. Hank was an occasional though secret patron of the Pastime Club, and was full of humorous sympathy with Al. He promised to value the furniture and pay a lump price for it at once.

And *that* was settled! Hank had a key to the house, and said he would attend to the business at once.

On the afternoon of the day when the Grand Jury began its deliberations, Al was sitting in his cell, utterly unable to read about Arizona, his heart beating with painful irregularity, waiting for the news of his indictment.

The door was unlocked. Here was the jailer!

"Well-l, Arizona," he drawled, with jocose deliberation, "well, I'm sorry to part company with you—but I can't afford to keep you as a free boarder any longer."

Al jumped to his feet. "Quit your kidding!" he said thickly.

"No josh, Al, on the level it aint. You're free. The sky-pilot withdrew the charge. I guess your little wife got after him, hey? Nice little girl she is, too. Say, why don't you—but I guess you don't want my sermons, do you? So long, anyhow; you can beat it as soon as you like."

## V

Allan Davis walked home with his head higher in the air than ever it had been held before. But though he looked neither to the right nor the left, he felt all eyes fixed upon him. And indeed, many of them were. Stubbsville was not too large a place to have a personal and intimate interest in any man's trouble.

All right! Let them rubber! Let them talk! They wouldn't have the chance much longer!

He went to Hank Simmon's office, and received a really generous cash price for his furniture. He left enough money with Hank to clear up back rent, and the agent promised also to settle up Al's other small bills.

Then he telephoned to the railroad station. There was a fast train for the West, connecting with the line running through Arizona, leaving that night. He reserved a Pullman berth.

Then he went home to pack his trunk. He had started. He was on his way to Arizona.

As he let himself into the quiet, silent

cottage, whose western windows were burning in the golden glow of the setting sun, the lurking, invisible Something which he had tried to lock up within this home, but which had trailed him to the jail, now leaped upon him as if it had been waiting here all the time. He felt it take him by the throat—where there was a sudden lump that he had great difficulty in swallowing. And with an effort that shook him, he stiffened his face, as he entered his empty home, as a burglar might have put on a mask.

Marching up the stairs to his room, he dragged his trunk from under the bed and started his packing. He began to whistle. The harder he felt it was to control his lips to the firmness required for successful whistling, the louder he forced the note. His lively imagination suggested a dare-devil attitude. Why not be carelessly ironical? He began to whistle "Home, Sweet Home." But he didn't continue. Stooping over the trunk required too much exertion. He wished that he had thought to bring something to drink.

It was just as his whistling died out, that he heard a knocking at the street door.

He straightened up with a violent start and listened with suspended breath. The knock was repeated. Then the door was pushed open and somebody entered. Somebody was coming up the stairs.

Jeanie?

Instantaneous as a lightning flash came the thought.

Was it Jeanie coming up the stairs?

But the footsteps declared themselves to be a man's. A sharp pang of disappointment shot through Al.

"Is that you, Hank?" he called out.

"Hank? No—my name is Starr, John Starr," as the reply, and the curate entered the room.

Al was too astonished to say one word. His visitor glanced about, and then sat down, and stared straight at Al.

There was a queer, dancing kind of light in his eyes, and his flaming red hair was tousled as if blown about by a hurried wind, but his voice was very suave and gentle as he said:

"It wont do any good, you know."

"What wont do any good?" growled

Al. He had not made up his mind yet how to treat this extraordinary person.

"Going away wont. I mean, running away. Oh, no, I don't—I mean sneaking away. You can't get away from it like that."

"Get away from what?" snapped Al. He was strangely bewildered. He knew he ought to feel horribly insulted. He knew he ought to fire this red-haired sky-pilot out the window—or try to, anyhow. But in his heart he knew he was not angry. In his heart there was a feeling so much stronger than anger that it controlled all anger. "Get away from what?" he repeated. "Ah, what are you talkin' about?"

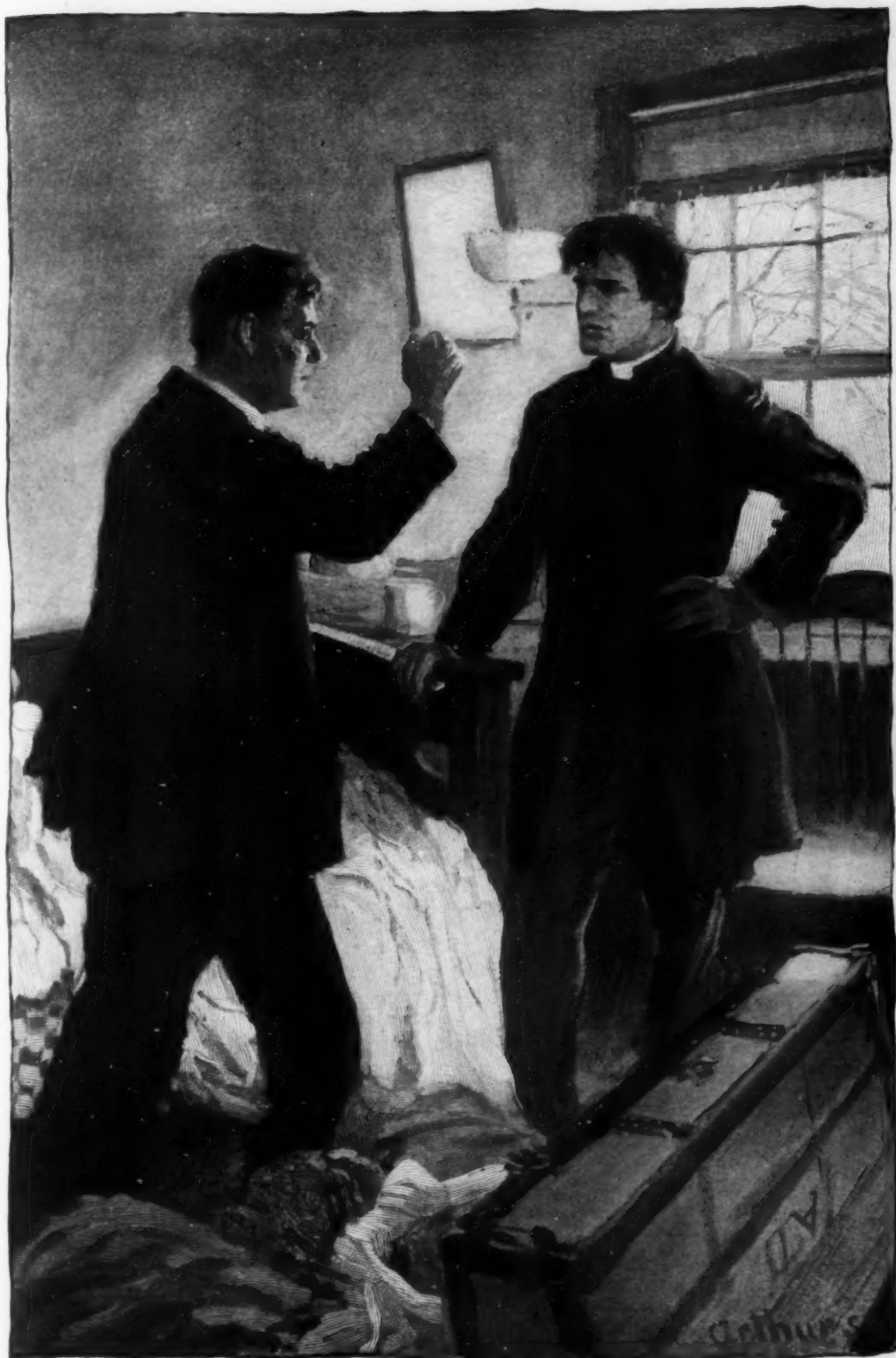
"You know what! And it will get you, too! You can't get away from it in Arizona, my friend!"

And the tall, big-bodied clergyman leaped to his feet, the sunlight streaming in from the west making his hair seem like a flame, as he tossed it back, and cried:

"Where do you imagine Arizona to be?"

Al stared at him in amazement, and muttered, as he pointed to the west: "Out there, somewhere."

"Not for you!" was the astonishing reply. "For you, Arizona is right here, or nowhere at all! I know all about *you*, my friend! You want to have adventures, and fight, and roam the desert. Well, why don't you? Have you the nerve? There's fighting and romance and adventure right here in Stubbsville, New Jersey, such as Arizona could never give you. This town is dead against you—all the decent part of it. Your wife has left you—you've killed her faith in you. Her family says she can never return. I know for a fact that you've lost all chance to go back to your job. You've lost your children—there's no court in this state that would take them from their mother. *And you think you are a dead game sport!*" These words came forth cold with an icy scorn. Then the tone leaped to a fiery heat. "Well, I think so, too! I see the stuff in you! Go to it and make good! Here's your Arizona—your romance, and your fighting. Right here in this New Jersey town. You yourself are the bad man you have to whip. Your



"Hold on," broke in Al, white to the lips, "that'll be about all I'll stand from you."

desert is the loneliness you've made for yourself. Have you got the nerve to stay in the real Arizona?"

"Hold on!" broke in Allan Davis, white to the lips. "That'll be about all I'll stand from you—see?"

"It's enough," said the other man. "Just one more thing. If you *do* find you have the nerve to scrap Stubbsville to a finish, you'll need work—and the old shops are closed tight against you. But we're going to give out a contract for painting the church. If you put in a bid, I think you'll win the contract. And *if* you did!" John Starr began to laugh. "Well, you'd be the biggest joke in Stubbsville, no question about it! The Pastime Club would especially appreciate it, wouldn't they? Well, it's up to you. Good evening."

And he left the room and the house without another word.

But as he turned the corner of the next street, he stopped, and whipped off his hat, as if he needed more air, and lifted his face, which under the shock of flaming hair was now chalky white and haggard. John Starr was obliged to pay a stiff price in reactions for his fervors. His trembling lips began to mutter, half audibly:

"Have I done the wrong thing, after all?"

He heard footsteps hurrying up behind him. Al came around the corner, carrying the coiled-up lariat.

"Look here," he said, with lips shaking more than Starr's, and a whiter face, and eyes more brilliant, "you know where my—my family is, don't you? Will you see that my—my boy gets this rope? It's his."

"Gladly," said Starr, intently studying Al's set face.

"And I want to send this money to my—to Mrs. Davis," continued Al. "It's part of the price of our furniture, but I guess she won't mind—seeing the kind of home it's been so long—" Abruptly he checked himself. "So we start this Arizona business with a new deal all around."

"So—so it is Arizona?" asked John Starr, almost piteously.

A queer smile touched Al's compressed lips as he looked at Starr. "Yes—Stubbsville, Arizona," he said. "I'll bid on that church job to-morrow. Gee, I started in to paint this town red—didn't I? Well, I'll try other colors as well. There's just one more thing I want to ask," he went on, the smile fading, and his lips working so oddly that for a moment he could not control them. Then he got out his question: "Say, what's your honest opinion about—about Mrs.—about my—about Jeanie, on the level?"

Starr replied. "I said you'd broken her faith—I didn't say you had killed her love." All the big clergyman's depression had fled. Again his eyes were flashing, his voice a trumpet, and his hair a flame. "You're a lucky man!" he shouted. "You'll have romance as well as fighting here in Stubbsville, Arizona. Go to it, Arizona Al—but remember you have as stiff a fight on your hands as a man ever tackled!"

"That's no pipe dream," said Al. A shyness touched him as he added, holding out his hand. "Let's shake on it—I'm much obliged to you!"

The sun was now disappearing in a level flood of golden light that transmuted the muddy suburban fields and mean houses. Something in Al's eyes caused, as well, a rainbow to gleam before them.



# "BELLA DONNA" and OTHER NEW PLAYS

by LOUIS V. DeFOE

THE romantic maxim, "all the world loves a lover," as well as the less pleasant but equally true saying, "there is no fool like an old fool," is amusingly exemplified in "Years of Discretion," the first family collaboration by the Hattons, Frederic and Fanny, of Chicago—which is David Belasco's contribution to the mid-winter dramatic season at the theatre in New York which bears his name. The play wears lightly its smiling mask of comedy but it contrives to point a sober moral even when it is busiest adorning an amusing tale. It is a warning to women who have arrived at what Henry James has called "the middle years"

to beware the deceptive Indian summer of life lest they mistake it for a return of the springtime of youth.

Mr. Belasco must have realized the difficulty of interesting audiences in the romantic affairs of elderly lovers, for not only did he lavish upon the Hattons' light and attenuated little play all his incomparable skill as a stage manager, but he assembled for its performance a com-

pany which, for the magnet of the names it contains and the all-around superiority of its acting ability, has had no rival during the present year. Under such favorable conditions a story which persistently skirts the edge of farce and now and then dips boldly into burlesque, successfully preserves the disguise of an almost serious meaning.

The recrudescence of a New England widow is the phenomenon with which this sprightly, sparkling scrap of stage fiction deals. In the withering September of a bereaved life consecrated to the careful rearing of her son and to sedate, strong-minded problems of public reform, *Mrs. Farrell Howard* imagines that she again feels

the glow of blossoming May. The gay social whirl of New York supplies the irresistible temptation. A visit to the home of her friend, *Mrs. Brinton*, likewise bereaved and happily recovered, offers the opportunity for its indulgence. Then follows *Mrs. Howard's* rejuvenation, her romantic adventures and, in the end, her disillusionment.

The glimpse of the plain little woman

Photo-  
graph by  
White,  
New  
York

Nazimova's snakiest  
gown in "Bella Donna."



Photograph by White, New York.

Alice Putnam and Herbert Kelcey, and Effie Shannon and Lyn Harding in the scene in Act II of

from the suburbs of Boston before she begins to indulge in her metropolitan high jinks provides the needed contrast to the transformation which she undergoes when she places herself in the hands of *Mrs. Brinton's* French maid. Dressed in a somber gown of brown, with hair tinged with grey sleeked down, and comfortable in the absence of those outlines of figure which are indispensable in the world of fashion, she trips up the stairs, soon to re-emerge as an entirely recreated being. The hocus-pocus of the boudoir has removed years from her life in the brief interval; the sparkle of youth

is in her eyes; its bloom is upon her cheeks. New England restraint is cast aside and *Mrs. Howard* plunges recklessly into her round of social dissipations.

Soon three worshipers are dangling at the ends of the gay widow's strings. One is *Amos Thomas*, a parlor Socialist who, in matters of matrimony, admits that he is a "varietist." Another is *Michael Doyle*, an ardent and impetuous Irishman. The third, who in the end is destined to carry her off in triumph, is the polished cosmopolite, *Christopher Dallas*.



"Years of Discretion," which presents to the public David Belasco's idea of really artistic love-making.

It is impossible to describe in detail the round of gaiety which ensues or the amusing incidents which multiply as the bachelors lay siege to the rich and festive widow's heart. "She looks lovely but not like mother," is the amazed comment of her son—who threatens to marry and make her a grandmother just to bring her back to her senses. To which the rejuvenated wonder gaily retorts, "What confidence!"

But the strain of the pretense soon begins to tell. *Mrs. Howard*, who outwardly is partial to the cocktail and the cherry thereof, inwardly craves pepsin. Abused nature will not be denied its revenge. She

pays the penalty of trim feet in aching toes, of a willowy waist in tortured bones. By the time the persistent *Thomas* has been disposed of for good and *Doyle* has lost his chance by snatching a kiss without the widow's permission if not against her will, and *Dallas* to the melting strains of a Victrola love song has successfully subjugated her heart, the hour of disillusionment has come.

The wedding takes place at the widow's Brookline home. The scene is now a blossoming New England door garden in June. But the mature bride and elderly groom, in what should be their hour of

bliss, find themselves ill at ease and depressed. The tour of the world which they have joyously planned for the honeymoon has lost its attractions in the light of the quiet domestic comforts of the home which they have begun to crave. In the end they resolve to cease the deception which they have been practicing on each other and on themselves. The final curtain finds them dressed again in comfort and in keeping with their years, ready to accept the inevitable in the twilight of their romance.

It is not intended as a reflection against the substance of "Years of Discretion" to say that its fiber is greatly strengthened by the almost flawless performance. Certainly the sparkle and comedy spirit with which Effie Shannon impersonates the rejuvenated widow are a powerful asset in the play's favor. As her fortunate suitor there could be no more polished and ingratiating performance than that given by Lyn Harding, while Bruce McRae as the effervescent Irishman, *Doyle*, plays with grace and admirable poise and distinction. Nor are these all. Robert McWade, Jr., amusingly portrays the vehement parlor Socialist, and Grant Mitchell humorously indicates the bewilderment of *Mrs. Howard's* solicitous son. Even this notable list does not exhaust Mr. Belasco's resources, for there remain in other rôles Herbert Kelsey, E. M. Holland, Alice Putnam and various others. The danger of such a cast lies in the temptation of the actors to play for individual effect, but under Mr. Belasco's firm control each subordinates himself to the general good of the performance. A more flawless interpretation of a play or one in which the humorous note of comedy is more skillfully sustained cannot easily be imagined. For this reason "Years of Discretion" reflects more credit on its producer than on its authors.

THE character of the heroine of "Bella Donna," as Mme. Alla Nazimova impersonates her in the play which James Bernard Fagan dramatized from Robert Hichens' novel, must be quite incomprehensible to those who happened first to make her acquaintance in the narrative form in which the story was originally written. When I saw Mrs. Patrick

Campbell last summer as the seductive adventuress in the production which Sir George Alexander made in London, I thought her interpretation of the sensual, languorous *Mrs. Chepstow* could not possibly be more remote from the author's intention. But I was mistaken. Mrs. Campbell's *Mrs. Chepstow* was at least an English woman. Having seen the venomous, eel-like Egyptian serpent into which the Russian actress transforms her, I am convinced that there are no lengths to which theatric eccentricity cannot go.

"Bella Donna" introduces Mme. Nazimova into Charles Frohman's group of stars, and she has taken care that her entrance be effectively accomplished, even though it be at the sacrifice of the character in which she appears. It may be, however, that the absence of every vestige of sympathy from her rôle has influenced her to rob it of its Anglo-Saxon traits and turn it into a reptile-like, writhing creature which resembles, more than anything else, a Hindoo sorceress or a Persian snake charmer.

The play which otherwise closely follows Mr. Hichens' story is frank melodrama. It opens in the consulting room in London of *Dr. Meyer Isaacson*, the Jewish physician who has become famous for his success in ministering to the fancied ills of idle, neurotic women. From the *Doctor's* conversation with one of his patients is gathered what kind of a creature *Mrs. Chepstow* really is. Notorious even in the dissolute London society to which she belongs, she has become further discredited by being dragged through a scandalous divorce trial. And now this woman, whose beauty has caused her to be known as *Bella Donna*, is plotting to marry the *Hon. Nigel Armine*, who expects to inherit from his brother the family's title and fortune.

Presently *Bella Donna* herself comes. She pretends to be anxious concerning her health but her real purpose is to learn how far gossip has connected her name with *Nigel*, who is *Dr. Isaacson's* friend. She discloses her intention to go to Egypt—not for her health but for her happiness. The *Doctor* argues against it. He is aware that *Nigel*, too, is planning a visit to the Nile. And a little later, when *Nigel* also calls, the deaf ear he turns to



Photograph  
by White,  
New York

Below is shown Effie Shannon as *Mrs. Howard*, the Brookline widow, when she arrives in New York determined to abandon the career of a "home-body" and have a round of love affairs and other pleasures.

Above is a scene the same evening, when transformed by a French maid into a butterfly of fashion she assists her three admirers in mixing and drinking cocktails.

his friend's discreet warning makes it plain that he is already fast in the siren's grip.

The expected has happened when the second act opens in the Villa Anroud at Luxor on the banks of the Nile. In the intervening three months *Nigel* and *Bella Donna* have been married. The ill-assortment of the match and the ennui of the Egyptian life are already weighing heavily upon the passionate, unscrupulous woman, and she has begun to find solace in the swarthy arms of the rich and inscrutable *Mahmoud Baroudi*, who exercises a strange fascination over her. The news that the birth of an heir has deprived her husband of his expected inheritance sounds a death knell to her ambitions. Her repugnance to *Nigel* turns to hatred and she abandons herself completely to her richer prey.

The infatuated *Baroudi* is a villain, but he is altogether too discreet to rob an Englishman openly of his wife. Insidiously he proposes a better



Mme. Nazimova as Mrs. Chepstow, and Robert Whitworth as Mahmoud Baroudi, in "Bella Donna."

way. His faithful servant *Hamza* makes delicious coffee. And *Nigel* is passionately fond of good coffee. Why should not *Bella Donna* take the trusted *Hamza* into her service and have him prepare his famous coffee recipe for her husband? *Bella Donna* understands and agrees. Thus the poison note in the play's melodramatic motif is struck!

The exotic Egyptian atmosphere, which already has enveloped the drama, grows heavier in the third act. Four weeks have passed and *Bella Donna* and *Nigel* are on a journey up the Nile aboard the dahabeah *Loulia* which *Mahmoud Baroudi* has placed at their disposal. The Englishman has begun to suffer from a strange illness that *Dr. Hartley*, an American physician whom *Bella Donna* has called, attributes to a sunstroke which he suffered some time before. It is evident that the man is dying. You note his feebleness and ashen pallor when he totters out upon the deck for his evening cup of cof-

Photograph by White,  
New York. Copyright,  
1912, by Charles  
Frohman.

fee, into which the crafty, obsequious *Hamza* deftly sprinkles the sugar of lead.

Until this point in the play has been reached there has been little subtlety in the telling of the story and almost no suspense in the dramatic interest. Conflict has scarcely entered at all into the sordid recital of an evil woman's avarice and sensual passion. But with the coming of *Dr. Meyer Isaacson* to his friend's rescue the interest begins to quicken. News has reached the physician in London of *Nigel's* mysterious malady. Knowing *Bella Donna* as he does, *Isaacson's* suspicions have been instantly aroused.

The dahabeah is moored to a rocky shore when in the twilight *Dr. Isaacson* comes aboard and demands to see his friend. Tactfully at first and then with greater vehemence *Bella Donna* resists him. *Nigel*, she urges, is improving under the care of *Dr. Hartley*, who is thoroughly competent to handle the case. Besides, her husband has retired for the night and must not be disturbed. The sick man's voice is heard feebly summoning his wife back to the cabin, and *Isaacson*, left alone, pours the liquid from the half-emptied coffee cup into a bottle.

The physician's next step is to demand a consultation with *Dr. Hartley*. The latter's professional jealousy is aroused and the proposal is indignantly refused. Then *Bella Donna's* plausible solicitude and her promise that her husband shall see his friend on the next day avert, for a moment, the physician's suspicions. The woman's triumph seems complete. But as *Dr. Isaacson* is about to leave the yacht, *Nigel* totters from his cabin and the two friends meet. One glance convinces the physician that his first surmises were correct. He turns upon the woman with open accusations which send her into a fury of mingled fear and anger. Then, in a burst of uncontrollable passion, she orders him to leave the boat. "When I come back," *Isaacson* replies, "it will be with the police!"

In the end *Nigel* returns to London in the care of his friend. *Bella Donna* seeks *Mahmoud Baroudi*, but her Egyptian paramour is too crafty to offer her his protection. The last seen of her is when she goes alone into the desert to be swallowed up in its stillness or to re-emerge

in another earthly perdition, the play does not say which.

Although Mme. Nazimova heightens the bizarre, exotic effect of the drama by her strange interpretation of *Bella Donna*, she makes the character everything except human. Her performance is a curious exhibition of studied poses and physical contortions. So overloaded with mannerisms is her acting that she is dramatically effective only in her encounter with the London physician at the climax. Similar eccentric tendencies have already destroyed Mme. Nazimova's once great efficiency in Ibsen rôles, and they will eventually lead her, unless promptly checked, to the oblivion that has swallowed Olga Nethersole.

For a fool of the *Nigel Armine* type there can be no real sympathy, even when he becomes the victim of a murderous conspiracy. But Frank Gilmore gives a sound performance of the character. Robert Whitworth does not disclose those fascinations which make *Mahmoud Baroudi's* ascendancy over the woman understandable, playing the rôle, rather, with a cold and distant dignity. Claus Bogel indicates capitally the evil nature of the miscreant *Hamza*. Charles Bryant in the rôle of *Dr. Isaacson* is forcible, without, however, suggesting that character's pronounced racial traits. There is a fair grade of ability among the lesser members of the company and an approach to perfection in the manner in which the highly pictorial scenes of the play are staged.

THERE is nothing that stirs the sluggish blood of the hardened theatre-goer quite so much as the thrill and mystery of a good detective melodrama. It has even been said there is no such thing as a bad detective play; and when one comes along that has the approval, to say nothing of the coöperation, of so famous a sleuth as William J. Burns, it behooves an audience to take a firm grip on the arms of its orchestra chairs and sit tight.

I presume it was professional pride that prompted Mr. Burns to pause in his chase of real evil-doers and lend professional aid to Harriet Ford and Harvey J. O'Higgins, who are the authors of "The Argyle Case." He must have dis-

covered long ago that the conventional stage detective—with apologies to the eminent *Sherlock Holmes*—is invariably a ludicrous libel on his calling. Thanks to his expert advice, "*Never-Sleep*" *Kayton*, whom Robert Hilliard is impersonating in "*The Argyle Case*," is free from those skulking, gum-shoe tactics which in the past have been considered indispensable to unravelers of stage crime. The change may bring a shock to connoisseurs of old-time detective melodrama. It may even deprive the play of some of its sensational thrills. But it brings "*The Argyle Case*" much closer to the real thing.

"*The Argyle Case*" is the case of a rich old man who was found murdered in his library. The family is completely in the dark as to the perpetrators of the crime. The police, who are promptly summoned, confess that they are baffled. At last, when the trail has grown cold, "*Never-Sleep*" *Kayton* is called in. *Kayton* resembles a prosperous lawyer or broker much more than a human bloodhound. The celerity with which he gets to work instantly wins your confidence in him. The fact that *Mary Masuret* is old *Argyle's* adopted daughter and that she is to inherit under his will a slice of his fortune interests the detective at once. But when *Mary* and *Bruce Argyle*, the murdered man's son, are purposely left alone together and each in horror betrays a suspicion that the other committed the deed, he takes up the scent in another direction. It is the discovery of a counterfeit bank note hidden between the leaves of a book in old *Argyle's* library that now claims *Kayton's* attention.

Meanwhile you are being made acquainted with the newest methods of crime detection. Finger-prints are transferred from the library table and developed on sensitized paper. A carefully worded "come-on" advertisement is published in the evening newspaper. A certain *Mrs. Martin* responds. Her finger-prints, too, are deftly taken by *Kayton* while she is unsuspectingly signing a document. The advice of *James Hurley*, old *Mr. Argyle's* lawyer, is deferentially listened to—and not acted upon. Meanwhile the sets of finger-prints are compared. The chase now leads in *Mrs. Martin's* direction. To establish an espionage

over the suspect, *Mary Masuret* rents a room and goes to live in her house. *Kayton*, of course, explains to *Mrs. Martin* that the girl is suspected of the murder and is being kept out of sight because of the annoying publicity her predicament has received. Thus the woman is thrown off her guard.

Now come further and more interesting developments. The scene is a rickety garret in which old *Doc Kreisler*, an expert and notorious counterfeiter, and his confederates are manufacturing spurious notes. A dictograph has been placed in the den by the detective. The double scene reveals *Kayton's* agents in an adjoining building impassively recording every word that is spoken. They learn, among other things, that *Mary Masuret*, whom old *Mr. Argyle* adopted in her childhood, is *Mrs. Martin's* daughter. *Mrs. Martin* is the wife of *Doc Kreisler* and is weary of the criminal life she has been forced to lead. The officious, cocksure lawyer, *Hurley*, is the friend of both and in the habit of visiting them in their den.

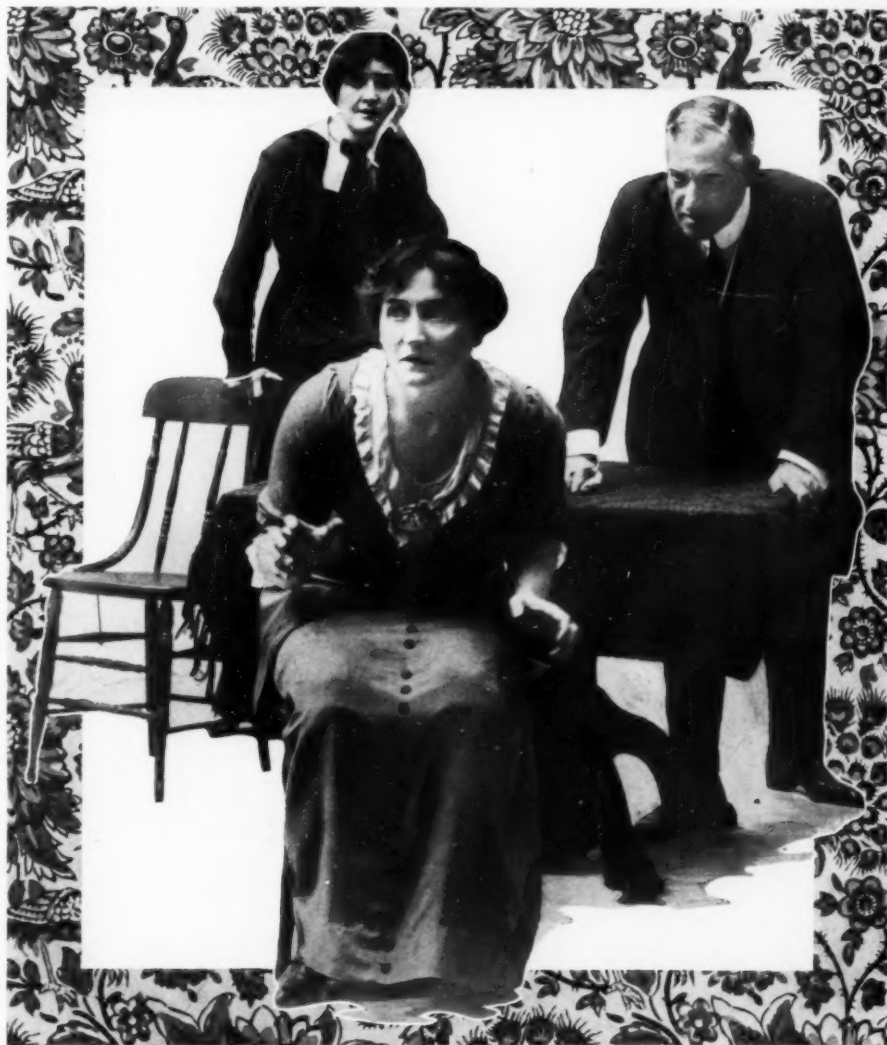
Up to this time there has been nothing very thrilling in the development of the play, but the exhibition of the newest processes of crime detecting has been very interesting nevertheless. The dramatic spark flashes when a drunken confederate of the counterfeiters menaces the life of *Mary Masuret*. True to his promise, *Kayton* is on hand to protect her. At the head of his men he bursts into the room. He risks his life with impunity and rescues her. Why not? It has been evident all along that he is falling in love with her.

The ensuing tragedy upsets the audience's calculations. Neither *Mary* nor *Kayton* is harmed. But, true to his threat to his wife, *Doc Kreisler* blows out his brains rather than fall into the clutches of his old enemies, the police. The other members of the counterfeiting gang are rounded up, but the murderer of old *Argyle* is still at large.

*Mrs. Martin* is then lured back to *Kayton's* office. She is confronted with the finger-prints. The verbatim report of her conversations with *Kreisler* are read to her. She is told it is known that *Mary Masuret* is her child. The revelation, when it is made to *Mary*, leads to one of

the emotional moments of the play. During it the older woman breaks down. She admits that she was in old *Argyle's* library on the night of the murder, but it was *Hurley*, the lawyer of the victim and go-between of the counterfeiters, who

opening night of the play that there was not an incident in "The Argyle Case" which had not been paralleled in fact. He also said that Robert Hilliard's performance of "*Never-Sleep*" Kayton was more like a real detective than the stage



Photograph by Gilbert & Bacon, Philadelphia  
Detective *Asche Kayton* in the counterfeiters' den, in "The Argyle Case."

committed the deed. Then "*Never-Sleep*" Kayton and his wide-awake operatives take some much needed slumber, but not until the great detective has been rewarded with *Mary's* promise to marry him.

Mr. Burns told the audience on the

had ever known before. In the face of such expert opinion as this, what is there left for a mere dramatic critic to say?

It might be added, though, that Mr. Hilliard plays the detective with distinction. To Selene Johnson, as *Mrs. Martin*, falls the emotionalism without which no

melodrama can be complete. Stella Archer is a fairly sympathetic heroine. The character of *Doc Kreisler* is effectively embodied by Bertram Marburgh, as are his confederates by John Beck and Frank R. Russell. The subordinate detectives on *Kayton's* staff resemble prosperous bank clerks, which probably is a truthful way of representing them. The

cleverness, that one is J. Hartley Manners, whose "Peg O' My Heart" has attained a success that it could never have approached save for the delightful personality and rare comedy talents of Laurette Taylor, who acts its leading character. "Peg O' My Heart" is not much more than a monologue for Miss Taylor, but while she is on the stage, which is



Photograph by Gilbert & Bacon, Philadelphia  
Robert Hilliard enacting W. J. Burns' idea of what a stage detective should be in "The Argyle Case."

character of *Hurley*, the murderer, acted by Alphonz Ethier, is more hazily drawn, but the intention evidently has been to keep him out of the audience's interest in order to add surprise to the *dénouement*.

**I**F ever an author had reason to feel grateful to a star for carrying his play to popularity solely by her individual

most of the time, its interest does not falter. And it gives her a chance to show that she possesses natural gifts which, when she learns to employ them with a little finer method, will lift her in the scale of one of the most difficult branches of her profession. As it is she will be able to act *Peg* for years, to her own profit and the delight of all who see her.

This low comedy rôle of *Peg* is literally stuffed with opportunities which would make glad the heart of any actress. She is an awkward slip of an Irish girl, with tousled red hair, roguish eyes and a brogue, who goes, in accordance with the stipulation of her dead uncle's will, to live in the family of her aristocratic relatives in England, there to acquire the polish

Nor are the supercilious *Mrs. Chichester*, her haughty daughter *Ethel* and her vapid cup of a son *Alaric* pleased with the intrusion of the quick-witted, sharp-tongued *Peg* in their midst. When she appears with her well stuffed valise and her yellow dog *Michael* they decide to tolerate her only because their finances are running low and they are in need of



Photograph by Matzene, Los Angeles

Laurette Taylor, who has won her place as a star by her interpretation of *Peg* in "*Peg O' My Heart*."

of manner and knowledge of the social world which will fit her to make best use of the fortune he has bequeathed her. *Peg* is the daughter of a happy-go-lucky poor relation of the family on its Irish side, who has emigrated to America, and she is not at all pleased with the prospect of the straight-laced, ceremonious life which confronts her.

the allowance their dead relative has set aside for her education. But they are determined not to tolerate *Michael*, an attitude which greatly mystifies *Peg*, since *Ethel's* toy pup is a privileged member of the family. *Peg* instantly objects and declares war, protesting that she "can't understand this class distinction in dogs."



Photograph by White, New York

Laurette Taylor as Peg. in "Peg O' My Heart."

Thereafter *Peg* leads a miserable existence. She is scolded and nagged and punished. She is trussed up in uncomfortable clothes and made to do all manner of things for which she has not the slightest taste and in which she does not take the remotest interest. Particularly does she dislike her studies. "There's a little devil in me, I guess," she says. "He's tuggin' at me now—he hates knowledge!" And then she protests, "What's the use of knowin' the heights of mountains I'm never goin' to climb or learnin' the history of a lot of kings that should 'a' been a shamed of themselves?"

The *Chichesters* are a family of the most outrageous snobs, and the purpose of the play with its commonplace situations and ancient expedients is to make them the butts of *Peg's* sharp wit and ready retort. Eventually in *Sir Gerald* she meets a man with a kind heart who seems to understand her. He perceives that the blunt, rebellious girl is pure gold compared with the heartless people upon whose mercies she has been thrust.

The generosity of *Peg's* nature is at last put to the test. Coming home from a dance which she has surreptitiously attended with *Sir*



Photograph by White, New York  
Laurette Taylor as *Peg*, and H. Reeves Smith as *Jerry*, in "*Peg O' My Heart*."

*Gerald*, after having been refused permission by her aunt, she surprises *Ethel* in the act of running away with *Christopher Brent*, a married man with whom that supposed paragon of good breeding and right conduct has become infatuated. The family is aroused, but *Peg* permits suspicion to fall upon herself—which so greatly pleases *Sir Gerald* a little later when he finds it out, that he rescues the forlorn little creature from her surroundings and the curtain falls with the intimation that he is to make her his wife.

The play in its bare details seems hardly worth the telling, but in Miss Taylor's delicious handling it becomes exactly what Mr. Manners has sub-titled it, a "comedy of youth." It has both sparkle and sympathetic appeal, and for these

persistent qualities its author has principally to thank Miss Taylor, whose manner is nearly always grotesque, whose speech is always in dialect, but who nevertheless touches moods of the most exalted womanly tenderness. There is something in the wide, luminous eyes of this gifted comedienne which is almost irresistible. By a look or a gesture she conveys to her audience a meaning that the spoken word cannot express. Her sense of character is absolute and she knows how to infuse the type she represents with her own personal charm.

Although Miss Taylor contributes the life-giving spark to the play, the other rôles, though irritatingly conventional, are by no means badly performed. H. Reeves-Smith acts *Peg's* titled lover with

his usual ease and repose; Emilie Melville plays with distinction the rôle of *Mrs. Chichester*; Hassard Short is capital as her spoiled son; and Christine Norman is intentionally unpleasant as her disagreeable daughter.

"Peg O' My Heart" fills a unique place among the season's plays. Its success is the triumph of an individuality. Without Miss Taylor it would be a failure.

AMONG the recent comic operas there has been none destined to greater or more deserved popularity than "The Firefly." It brings forward in Rudolf Friml, the writer of its melodious score, a new composer for whom a successful future is in store, and it provides for Emma Trentini, the frolicsome little Italian soprano who first came to this country as a grand opera soubrette, an opportunity not only to display her voice to good advantage but to exhibit her effervescent personality without restraint. Its producers must have realized that a prize had fallen into their hands, for they have provided for it a company of quite unusual singing and acting ability.

Otto Hauerbach, librettist in ordinary

to many indifferent composers in the past, is the author of the story, which deals with the fortunes of a forlorn little street singer whom a party of tourists finds on

a steamship pier as they are about to sail for Bermuda as guests of *Mrs. Oglesby Vandare* on board her private yacht. Need it be said that a matron with such a name is haughty and heartless?

It is *Jack Travers*, one of the party and engaged to marry *Mrs. Vandare's* daughter, who is first captivated by the firefly song of *Nina*, as the waif calls herself. He rescues her from the cruel padrone who is ill-treating her and turns her over to the care of two of the servants of the yacht. They hide her until the boat is well out at sea, when she emerges, calling herself *Tony Colombo* and disguised as a cabin boy.

Soon *Tony* becomes a general favorite with the party on the yacht. Her singing as she goes about her tasks completely captivates an old music master, *Herr Vogel*, who decides to make

her his protégée. But no sooner is Bermuda reached than the little Italian girl's masquerade is discovered and *Mrs. Vandare* orders her sent back to America.



Photograph by White, New York  
Emma Trentini, the grand opera singer, as *Nina*, in the light opera, "The Firefly."



Photograph by White, New York

Henry Vogel as *Herr Franz* and Emma Trentini as *Nina* in "The Firefly."

The good *Herr Vogel* is thus put to the disadvantage of having on his hands a girl for a protégée. But he remains true to his promise and provides for her musical education in Europe. It is the plaintive appeal of her song, "When A

Maid Comes Knocking At Your Heart," that wins for little *Nina* this rare good luck.

Of course fortune followed the musical studies of the little waif. Long after she has been forgotten by *Mrs. Vandare* and

her friends she returns to New York as a successful opera singer. The society matron is giving a reception at her house and *Herr Vogel* takes his former protégée to sing for the guests. None recognizes the *Nina* of other days until she reveals her identity to *Jack Travers* by singing her firefly song again. He has just been jilted by *Mrs. Vandare's* daughter so he falls a willing victim to the charms of the sprightly little girl he once befriended.

The story as it is related in three acts is mainly humorous, but it also contains delicate touches not often found in comic opera. The score includes almost every

element calculated to win popularity. Possibly its most beautiful number is "*Gianina*," which Miss Trentini sings with lovely effect, but nearly as attractive are "*Sympathy*," "*Love Is Like A Firefly*," "*Something*" and "*The Beautiful Ship From Toyland*." There is also some charming dance music in the score and a finale which brings the piece to a stirring climax.

Craig Campbell, Melville Stewart, Roy Atwell, Ruby Norton, Henry Vogel, Evelyn Carter Carrington and Audrey Maple do ample justice to their rôles, although Miss Trentini easily dominates the cast.



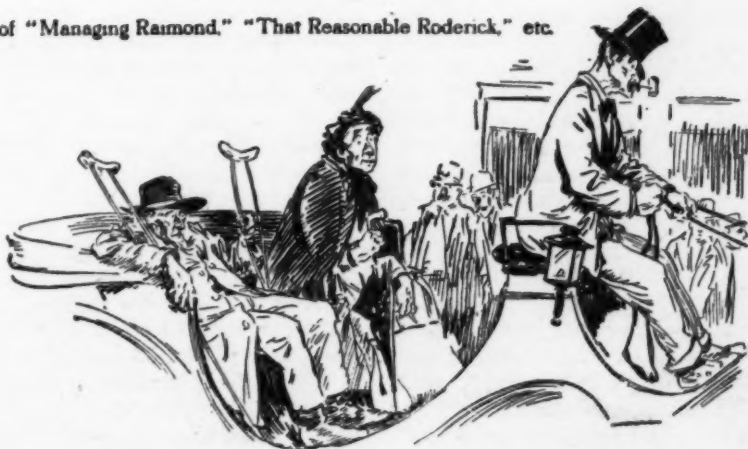
Photograph by White, New York  
Emma Trentini and Sammy Lee in "*The Firefly*."

# The G'ar'nteed Cure

by

KENNETT HARRIS

Author of "Managing Raimond," "That Reasonable Roderick," etc.



ILLUSTRATED BY HORACE TAYLOR

**T**HE prospect from the porch, whereon Jerry Clibb sat, in bitter contemplation of life's cussedness, might have been considered pleasing to eyes more æsthetic and less tinged with the yellow of bile than were Jerry's. A stretch of unshaven lawn, luxuriantly green, except where the century-old cedar spread its long, low boughs, extended to the whitewashed picket fence, where a line of hollyhocks reared their white and scarlet blooms. Across the road was the big barn, with outlines picturesquely broken by the subsidence of decay and clapboards weather-toned to dull silver; and beyond the barn were fields of sprouting rye and heading timothy, with the rich brown of the newly cultivated corn land, all divided by wavering partitions of vine-covered white oak rails, all Jerry's. But there was the dad-fetched

windbreak of poplar, screening the hired man and his inactivities from Jerry's view.

Jerry Clibb turned his lean, ropy old neck toward the house door and lifted his voice: "Minty! Oh, Minty!"

There was no immediate response, so he thumped with one of his crutches on the porch floor, and a scrawny, hollow cheeked, elderly woman presently appeared, wiping her arms on a wet apron.

"Go see what that lazy lummo is a-doin' now," commanded Jerry. "I bet he's stretched out under some tree."

"My land!" exclaimed Mrs. Clibb, fretfully. "'Taint five minutes ago sence I looked at him. How do you reckon I'm a-goin' to git this washin' out if you keep me on the jump this-a-way? Here's Doc Hopkins a-comin' up the road, too. I allow he's a-goin' to Wes Taylor's. I wish you'd let me call him."

"What for?" snarled the old man. "So he kin charge me up with another two dollars, plague take him!"

"He might do you some good," suggested Mrs. Clibb.

"Might do a cat's foot good," growled Jerry. "What good did he do me afore? He done said hisse'f he wasn't sure of nothin'. He wouldn't g'ar'ntee he could cure me. The only thing that's certain about them doctors is their bills, dern their grasping hides! Set an' gas for five minutes and then charge two dollars."

A buckboard driven by a short, sturdy, bearded man in a linen duster, went rapidly by. As it passed the poplar wind-break, Jerry shook his fist.

"I'll get even with you yet," he said, savagely. Then to his wife: "Air you agoin' to go see what Judd is a-doin'?"

"No, I haint," snapped Mrs. Clibb, and with that, she re-entered the house, from whence the distant "thud, thud" of her washboard rubbing came immediately with a sound of renewed energy. Jerry Clibb indulged in a few highly embellished remarks on feminine obstinacy and bent a straining ear toward the wind-break for the jingle of harness and the "gee" and "haw" of conscientious industry. Occasionally he heard them but not often enough to give him entire satisfaction.

An hour passed and then Jerry's listening ear caught the sound of wheels on the hard road. A few moments more and the buckboard at which he had shaken his fist came into sight and stopped with a suddenness that seemed entirely unpremeditated. The sturdy man in the linen duster snapped the hitch-rein in the post that stood beside the mounting block at the gate and then advanced briskly.

"Howdy, Uncle Jerry," he said cheerfully, dragging another splint-bottomed rocker forward and seating himself as he spoke. "How's the misery?"

"Doc Hopkins," returned Jerry, suspiciously, "be you axin' me neighbor-like or perffessional?"

The doctor laughed good-naturedly. "It wont cost you a cent, Jerry," he said. "I allowed I'd stop long enough to see how you were getting along. Just curiosity, idle curiosity."

"Well," said Jerry, "if that's all, I haint no objections to tellin' you that not having had no other doctors a-comin' around and lookin' wise as work oxes at a dollar a minute, I don't feel no worser than what I felt when you was here afore."

"That's good," chuckled Doc Hopkins. "Keep right on with the treatment and I wouldn't wonder if you came out all right in time. Taking any medicine?"

"No sir-ee," replied Jerry. "I aint takin' no medicine, an' what's more, I aint a-goin' to unless I can git a g'ar'ntee. I had 'em drive me into town last week, and Rufe Allen, he claimed that thisyer extrac' o' mandrake an' Car'lina tar was powerful good. He claimed Ed Saunders tried it for a misery he had an' it he'ped him a right smart."

"Will you g'ar'ntee it?" s'I.

"I'll g'ar'ntee it to be a dollar a bottle, but that's as fur's I'll go," says he.

"Put it back on the shelf," s'I. "When I pay out money, I want to know I'm a-gettin' money's wuth," I says."

"You didn't put it strong enough, Jerry," said the doctor. "You ought to have told him that when you pay out a dollar, you want to see two coming right back with nothing in sight to block the way. Furthermore, Jerry, when anybody pries a dollar away from you, he'll find some of your raw flesh sticking to it if he looks close. I'm hanged if I see how you ever get up the nerve to cut good potatoes for seed when you've got to run the risk of raising a crop."

Jerry's thin lips tightened to a grim hair line and then opened in their habitual wry twist. "I have to work for *my* money," he said. "That's the diffrunce betwixt you an' me. I cain't hitch up, drive out a mile or two, or such a matter, and then charge somebody two dollars any time I feel like it. I sut'n'y wouldn't have the nerve to, even if I could, I'll tell you that, Doc Hopkins."

"Well, Uncle Jerry," said Doctor Hopkins, "I reckon I'm just excitin' unpleasant memories by staying around so I'll be moving on to my next victim. I'd exercise if I were you, as I told you before. There's no charge for that advice, but Jerry,"—Doctor Hopkins shook an impressive forefinger,—"heaven have mercy

on your poor wallet if you ever come under my professional ministrations again."

He strode off chuckling and Jerry Clibb went perilously close to the verge of apoplexy.

That evening Mrs. Clibb reopened his wounds.

"If you'd only doctor some, Jerry," she said.

Jerry glared at her. "I aint never felt the drawbacks of bein' crippled up so much as I do right now," he said. "Jest come around this side of the table where I kin reach you. Come on. I'm achin' to pet you, you—you sprig of honeysuckle!"

"I wouldn't have a fit about it," observed Mrs. Clibb.

"Dum it!" said Jerry, furiously. "Whose house is this? I reckon, by gravy! I kin have a fit if I want to, or a dozen of 'em. If I take a notion I want a stroke of appleplexy, I'd like to know who's got a right to hender. Doctor some!"

"It might do you good," Mrs. Clibb persevered. "S'posin' you do have to pay out a few dollars. Wouldn't you save that in hired help as soon's you get to be around again? The way it is now, it takes one person's time to wait on you an' seems like to me, that's worth figgerin' on."

"Mebbe you think I haint never figgered on it," said Jerry, viciously.

"I s'pose you've got an idee that my brains has got crippled up as well's my laigs. You prob'bly got it into your haid that I'm enj'yin' settin' around he'pless whilst a set of slack, shif'less do-naughts ruin me with waste an' negleck indoors and out. Well, you're a heap mistook'en, that's all; but I haint a-goin' to throw good money after bad, neither. Not for 'mights' and 'mebbes.' When 'ifs' and 'ans' is pots an' pans, the tinker's trade wont be wuth a tinker's cuss."

"Well," sighed Mrs. Clibb. "They're your laigs. They aint mine, but I wish't you'd take suthin' sweetnin' fur your temper."

"You're a-sayin' that because I'm he'pless," said Jerry. "If I c'd even make out to throw a dish straight, you wouldn't dast sass me that-a-way."

"I sut'ny would not," admitted Mrs. Clibb, frankly. "That's the one thing I enj'y about your foolishness. It gives me a chanst to speak my mind that I haint had in forty years. I tell you, you ought to doctor."

Jerry groaned.

"What's more, I haint a-goin' to rub



"Who's a-goin' to be sold up now?" inquired the good woman

you with any more of that hoss liniment," she announced, "not without Doc Hopkins says fur me to do it."

"You jest wait till I get straightened out!" threatened Jerry, nodding his head at her grimly.

Mrs. Clibb, nevertheless, helped him to his chair by the drop lamp, when the evening meal was concluded, and she further relented to the extent of bringing him the weekly paper and spreading it when his paralyzed muscles rendered it difficult for him to perform the task unassisted. Meanwhile, she went about her dishwashing.

Presently the paper rustled and one of Jerry's crutches fell clattering to the floor.

"By Jucks!" exclaimed the old man.

Mrs. Clibb looked at him in surprise. His wrinkled visage was distorted into a grin of triumph. He actually laughed.

"Who's a-goin' to be sold up now?" inquired the good woman, leaping swiftly to a conclusion.

"Nobuddy."

"Who's dead then?"

"George Washington and Julius Caesar," Jerry answered. "Why don't you ask me who's born? I kin tell you. It's most generally fools or else blood-suckin' thieves, but oncet in a blue moon, you'll find a fellow that's got gumption an' don't want any money unless he earns it. Here's one of 'em—Ol' Doc Flegenson. He ga'r'ntees a cure."

"What fur?" inquired Mrs. Clibb.

"Sick folks," snapped the paralytic. "S'pose I meant hams? Spine troubles, lumbago, hip disease, sky-attics, rheumatiz, pralersis, an' if he don't cure you, he don't want your money. 'Ga'r'antees an absolute cure,' that's what he says. What's more, he'll pay a hundred dollars for any case he cain't cure. He's in St. Joe, an' by Jucks! I'm a-goin' to try him. If he don't do me no good, I haint got to pay him; he's got to pay me. If he cures me—" Jerry stopped and rubbed his chin with his good hand. "Well, I reckon he wont charge a turr'ble price if I make a dicker aforehand," he concluded. "It wont cost nothin' to find out nohow."

"What makes him so plaguey sure he kin make a cure?" asked Mrs. Clibb, suspiciously.

"He's been a-studyin' on that one thing for twenty years," answered Mr. Clibb, readily. "Studyin' twenty years; an' he's spent thousands of dollars experimentin' on thisyer boon to sufferin' humanity. You take it when a man's spent that much time an' money, he's jest nachelly got to have suthin' to show for it if he aint a pinhead."

"Supposin' he is a pinhead," suggested Mrs. Clibb.

"Thar haint no supposin' about you bein' one," said Jerry, savagely.

"Mebbe it's the folks that goes to him," Mrs. Clibb observed with great mildness, and Jerry's face grew a pronounced purple.

"Pick up that there paper an' read the adver-tisement," he said when he was able to speak. "'No Cure, No Pay,'—top of the page. Now! Will you tell me how you're a-goin' to git around that? 'Testermonials from thousands of grateful patients.'"

"I cain't read nothin' but the 'No Cure, No Pay,' 'thout my specs," said Mrs. Clibb. "What's a 'boon' anyway?"

"It's suthin' you put inside of your shoes an' it acks on the pores that centers in the soles of your feet," replied Jerry, "—in conjunction with the Flegenson's Specific, which is the modern medical miracle of the age. It draws the p'isen right outen your blood 'thout any knife or interferin' in any way with your business. No drugs an' no knife—on'y the harmless, strickly vegetubble specific compounded in Ol' Doctor Flegenson's own labertrys. There's a pitcher of the doctor an' the labertrys."

"I haint got no fault to find with the labertrys," remarked Mrs. Clibb, bending to look at the woodcuts. "They're right sightly; but you cain't tell much about the doctor, ercount his whiskers."

"What's the whiskers got to do with it?" demanded Jerry, wrathfully.

"I reckon the doctor thinks they've got a right smart to do with it or he wouldn't put 'em in the adver-tisement," answered Mrs. Clibb, sapiently. "'C'odin' to the pitcher, they kiver three times as much ground as the labertrys."

"If they got your mouth in life size, they'd hafter use two pages of the paper," snarled Jerry. "Now you shet it an' get

the pen an' ink an' we'll write a letter to him."

In the course of a few hours the letter was written. It contained an elaborate and circumstantial history of Mr. Clibb's case and indicated the willingness of the writer to give the "boon" a trial on the guarantee of a cure, providing the cost was not excessive. Old Doctor Flegenson's answer arrived within forty-eight hours. It covered three sheets of large sized note paper, closely typewritten.

Slightly ambiguous, perhaps, but eminently reassuring—cautious but confident. If the directions were carefully and conscientiously followed, Old Doctor Flegenson wrote, there was no question about an ultimate cure. He would, in fact, guarantee a cure for one hundred and fifty dollars, even if it took a month's time, including a full supply of the Electro-Absorbo appliances and the Magic Specific. "Remember our guarantee protects you absolutely. If we fail to cure you as agreed, your money will be refunded promptly and cheerfully."

"Daggone it!" said Jerry, with fallen chaps. "I wasn't figgerin' on nothin' like this. I allowed mabbe it might cost five dollars at the outside. I sut'nly wont pay him no hundred an' fifty. 'Taint reasonable."

"He's most as bad as Doc Hopkins, aint he?" observed Mrs. Clibb, sarcastically.

Jerry flushed. "Dum Doc Hopkins!" said he. "I'll show that shark a thing or two. I'll—by Jucks! if thisyer Flegenson kin cure me, I don't know but it'll be



"I'll g'ar'ntee it to be a dollar a bottle, but that's as fur's I'll go."

with the money jest to git even with Doc Hopkins."

"A hundred an' fifty dollars aint much to get that satisfaction," drawled Mrs. Clibb. "It wouldn't take more'n that to get me a new cook stove an' a patent wringer. I might git 'em for twenty-five an' have enough over for a dress pattern, but a hundred an' fifty would be the limit. I'll give you a g'ar'ntee on that."

Jerry paid no attention. He was absorbed in calculation. "I reckon I kin work him down, too," he muttered. "Mebbe if I went up to St. Joe and talked with him—"

"I'll hafter go along to he'p you around an' I kin buy the new bonnet I'm needin' there," said Mrs. Clibb, cheerfully. "I sut'n'y would like to see the city, an' the extra fare aint a-goin' to amount to a heap. Co'se there's dinner we'd hafter get, but then I'll save mabbe four bits on the bonnet."

"You need a straight wescut wuss'n you do a bonnet," snapped Jerry. "I'll see you get it, too, some o' these days. No, you get the pen and ink out again; I

reckon we kin do jest about as well writin'."

As a result of the correspondence, Doctor Flegenson made a further concession, being actuated mainly by a philanthropic spirit. It was relinquishing the idea of profit, as the expense of manufacturing the Electro-Absorbo appliances was large and the Magic Specific was compounded of the rarest and most costly herbs, but seeing that it was Mr. Clibb, he, the doctor, would guarantee the cure for a hundred dollars even if he lost money on the deal.

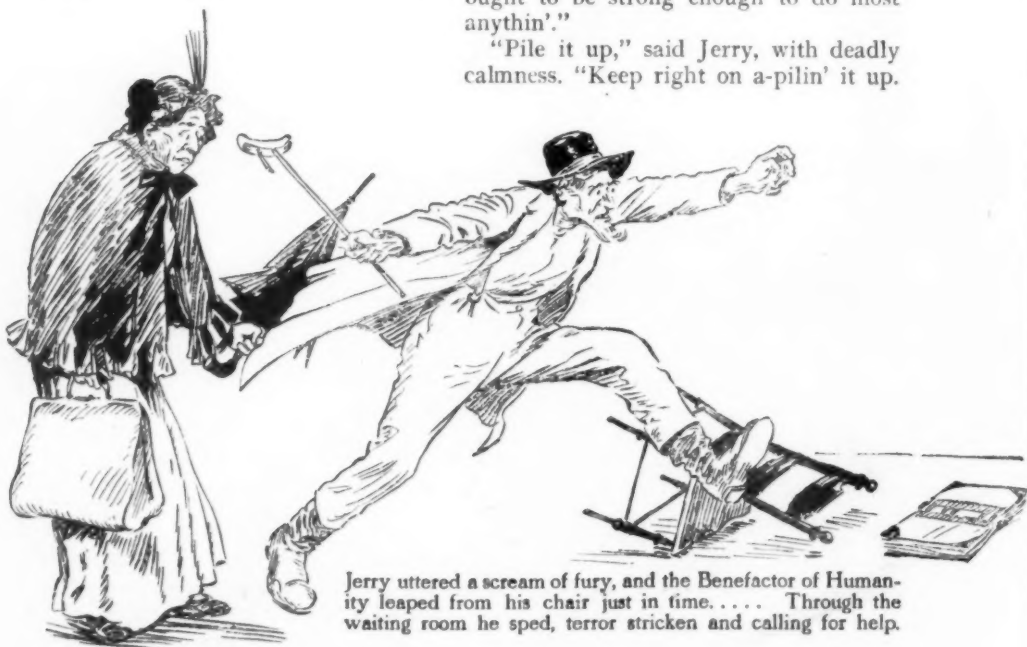
"There's some reason to that feller,"

"We congratulate you in advance on your cure," wrote Doctor Flegenson. "All you have to do is to use the treatment right, observing the directions. If you do your part, there can be no failure to get results."

"If I don't, you'll be out a considerable," Jerry commented sourly.

Mrs. Clibb drew one of the Electro-Absorbos from its wrapping. "Looks like a brown paper insole to me, 'ceptin' for the holes," she said, disparagingly. "I'd like for some one to tell me how that's a-goin' to draw p'iseñ; but then if it's drawn a hundred dollars outen you, it ought to be strong enough to do most anythin'."

"Pile it up," said Jerry, with deadly calmness. "Keep right on a-pilin' it up."



Jerry uttered a scream of fury, and the Benefactor of Humanity leaped from his chair just in time. . . . Through the waiting room he sped, terror stricken and calling for help.

remarked Jerry. "That ravenin' wolf, Doc Hopkins, wouldn't even make his bill a dollar seventy-five; had to have his full two dollars, cuss him!"

That evening Jerry affixed his crabbed signature to a check on the Holt County Bank for one hundred dollars, payable to the order of Edmund J. Flegenson, and dispatched it to that benefactor of humanity, who promptly sent back the stipulated guarantee, followed in due course by an express package containing six pairs of Electro-Absorbo foot drafts and as many bottles of the Magic Specific.

But they's a day o' reckonin' a-comin', I want to tell you."

"Want to put on a pair so's you kin git around an' split the kindlin' in the mornin'?" inquired the lady, undismayed.

"You hustle around an' get some water het up fur to soak my feet in like the d'rections says," Jerry commanded, "an' I'm a-goin' to have Judd come in an' watch me soak 'em an' take the Specific, too. I allow thisyer is a-goin' to cure me but I'm a-goin' to have a disinterested witness to testify I done followed instructions."

In accordance with this forethought-

ful resolution, the hired man was called in an hour before supper to witness the immersion of Mr. Clibb's feet in the indicated hot salt water. Then Mrs. Clibb vigorously shook a bottle of the Specific, uncorked it, and wrinkled her nose.

"I hope it tastes better than it smells," she observed, and poured the dose.

Jerry swallowed it and instantly his face was wreathed in spasms of disgust. He gasped, gagged and coughed. His eyes protruded; the veins swelled in his forehead.

"Don't it relish well, Jerry?" asked his wife, solicitously.

"Jerry," he said, "you want me to watch you take thisyer four times a day ever' day?"

"If it haint too much trouble," sneered Jerry.

"Trouble!" said the hired man. "By jolly! You ought to charge for admission."

Notwithstanding the nauseous quality of the compound, Jerry faithfully gulped down his doses at the required periods, in the presence of his wife and the hired man. At first, he seemed confident that he would get used to the taste but, as the



Jerry sputtered and clawed the air. "Mus' be turr'ble," said Judd, the hired man. "Let 'er come up, Jerry."

The patient shook his head emphatically but it was some minutes before he fully recovered. Then he turned to his wife.

"Does it relish well!" he shouted. "Does asfetidy relish well! Does castor ile an' wormwood tea taste good! Is sp'iled soapsuds what you'd want to take as a stiddy drink! By gunny! you're a-pilin' it up. Relish well!"

For once Mrs. Clibb had nothing to say, but Judd sniggered.

days went on, it seemed to get worse, until his diaphragm began to twitch at the very sight of the bottle and spoon.

By the end of the second week of the treatment, the hired man no longer grinned. He was not fond of his employer, or of a particularly sympathetic nature, but the spectacle of anguish that Jerry presented, his retchings, his shuddering and strangling, the convulsive protest of his whole physical being against the vile mixture would have aroused emotions of pity in a heart of chilled steel. Mrs. Clibb became almost tearful in her remonstrances.

"Why not quit, Jerry," she said. "'Taint a-doin' you no good 's'furs I kin see an' I look fur you to bust a blood vessel ever' time you take it."

"I'd like to bust your haid," declared Jerry. "You reckon I'm a-goin' to give up now? No, siree. They's two weeks more fur it to do good an' if I aint cured by that time, I git my money back an' another hundred dollars to boot. That's a hundred dollars a week an' I don't know any easier way of makin' that much, crippled like I am, even if it don't cure me, to say nothin' of Doc Hopkins. But it's a-goin' to cure me. When a med'cine's that powerful, it's got fur to do suthin'; not mentionin' the Electro-Absorbos."

"Jerry," said Mrs. Clibb, pityingly, "I hate to discourage you, but I throwed that last pair of Electro-Absorbos you was through with out in the yard, an' the pup got 'em an' et 'em, an' it didn't pheaze him. It stands to reason that if they had drawed any p'isen outen you, he'd a-had a colic anyway."

"It's a-doin' me good jest the same," Jerry maintained, obstinately.

Another week of the Magic Specific shook the patient's faith in the treatment. "I reckon Flegenson was right when he said thisyer case of mine was on-usual," he said. "Well, he's got hisse'f to blame. He took the resk of it an' he cain't go back of the contrack. An' a hundred dollars aint no more than it's wuth, either."

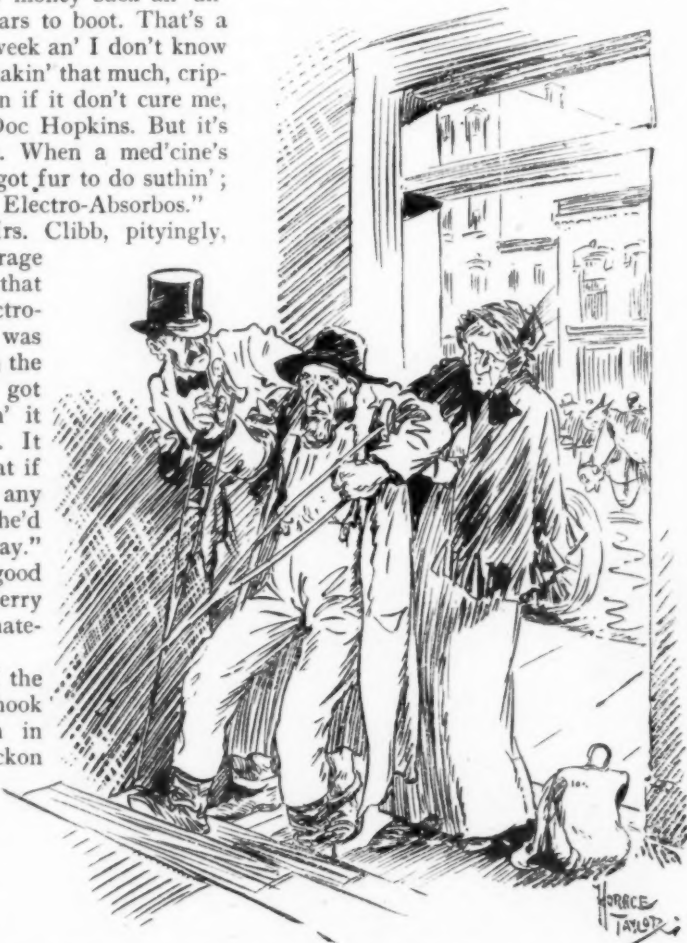
"Want me to write to him?" inquired Mrs. Clibb.

"Thar aint no need of writin'," replied Jerry. "He said he'd refund cheerful an' prompt', but I reckon he'll be promp'er if I go an' c'lect myse'f an' I haint a-

keerin' a right smart about the cheerful part of it. If I'm alive by the end o' the week, I'll take the trip."

"I doubt you'll be alive," said his wife. "I glory in your spunk, but I suthin'ly feel sorry for your innards if you're a-goin' to take twenty-eight more doses."

But Jerry did it. Twenty-eight more



With the help of the hackman, Mr. and Mrs. Clibb at last arrived at the doctor's waiting room.

times, with loathing inexpressible and sickened to the soul, he gulped the dreaded potion and, by sheer force of will, controlled the rebellious stomach that would have rejected it. An hour after the final ordeal, the spring wagon was at the door, and supported by Judd and Mrs. Clibb, Jerry hobbled painfully

down to the mounting block and from that eminence, was half hoisted, half dragged into the vehicle. At the railway station, he was painfully transferred to a seat in the car and was presently *en route* for St. Joe.

There was no difficulty in finding Old Doctor Flegenson. The trouble was in mounting the stairs to his office in the second story of the not very imposing building near the levee that sheltered that eminent scientist. With the help of the hackman, however, that was accomplished and Mr. and Mrs. Clibb at last arrived at the doctor's waiting room. As the doctor was wont jocularly to remark, the "ante" room was the inner sanctum itself.

A sallow young woman, in a black office dress, laid down a book and arose from behind a desk by the window as they entered.

"We want to see the doctor," said Jerry.

"He's engaged with a patient just now, but I'll take your name in," answered the young woman. "Who shall I say?"

"You don't need to use no name," said Jerry, craftily. "Jest tell him I'm a-waitin' to see him."

The young woman went to a door and knocked, then opened it and disappeared. In a moment or two she came out again. "The doctor will see you in a minute," she said. "Please be seated."

The minute passed and three or four more. Then the door was suddenly opened and an elderly man, with a purple and bulbous nose set in a red and erupted face, came out, but turned, with his hand on the door knob, to address somebody in the inner room.

"Well, good-by once more, doctor," he said in a somewhat louder tone than necessary, "and if I ever hear of anybody afflicted the way I was, I'll send 'em to you if I pay the bills myself. And I'd be glad to pay you double what you charged me if you'd let me, you understand. It's worth five thousand dollars to me, what you've done. I spent that much doctoring without getting any relief before I come to you. Better let me pay you another fifty anyway, just to ease my mind."

He pulled out a bulky pocketbook and

was for re-entering the room, but a tall, be-spectacled man whose beard bore a modified resemblance to the Flegenson decoration, confronted him and, taking him by the arm, playfully pushed him into the waiting room.

"That's all right, Mr. Dollop; that's all right," said the tall man, genially. "I'm glad to have had the opportunity of helping you, but it's against my rule to take a cent more than my regular fee. Not another cent, sir. Good day. Who's next?"

The grateful patient went off, still grumbling and shaking his head.

"You're next?" inquired Doctor Flegenson of the Clibbs. "Then step inside."

He admitted them to a small inner room, shabbily furnished with a desk and chair, a lounge that evidently had a night shift in the character of a bed, and a table covered with a soiled towel upon which were displayed a few surgical instruments. In one corner of the room, whose atmosphere was heavy with stale tobacco fumes, stood a bookcase, one shelf of which was devoted to bottles; in another corner was an old-fashioned electrical machine.

"Now what seems to be the trouble?" inquired the doctor, when Jerry had been lowered with some difficulty to the lounge.

"Is that feller crazy?" Jerry asked in his turn, nodding at the door.

"Crazy?" repeated Doctor Flegenson. "Certainly not. Why do you ask?"

"What made him want to pay you more'n you charged him?" demanded Jerry.

The doctor laughed easily. "Oh, that's not at all uncommon," he said. "But it's something I never allow. I'm not in the business just for the money I can make out of it. I have a duty to humanity and if I can perform that and clear expenses, I'm more than satisfied. I see you are crippled."

"That's what I wanted you fur to see," repeated Jerry. "It's what I come here fur."

"You've come to the right place, sir, I believe," said Doctor Flegenson, complacently. "I don't brag but I think I may promise that we can straighten you out."

"That's what you done promised me, but I'm a right smart of a way from straightened," Jerry informed him. "'Bout as fur as a dawg's hine laig, I reckon. My name's Clibb—Clibb, of Little Tarkio, an' you took a contrack to cure me up o' my misery. Well, sir, I've used up them Electro-Absorbo boons you sent an' I've took the Specific for the full month an' I haint cured—not by a jug-full. Now what I want is fur you to pay me back the hundred dollars I give you an' the hundred dollars you offer in black an' white fur any case you fail to cure."

day. I got the witnesses." Jerry's voice rose in shrill wrath at the remembrance of it.

"I don't doubt your word, Mr. Clibb," said Doctor Flegenson, soothingly. "No witnesses are required, I assure you. And it didn't cure you? Strange! Well, well! And now you wish to have your money refunded—and the forfeit paid? Very good, Mr. Clibb. If that's what we agreed to—have you the contract with you? Of course we'll cheerfully pay—thank you."

Jerry handed him the contract, which



"Quit your dancin'," said the policeman, giving him a gentle shake

Doctor Flegenson smiled. It was evident that he was going to be cheerful about it. "Well, we have to live up to our contracts, Mr. Clibb," he observed. "But—you are quite sure that you used our appliances and took the Specific according to directions?"

"I sut'nly did," replied Jerry, emphatically. "I've got witnesses to prove it. I used the boons an' I swallered that dad-rotted stinkin' Specific right to the dot four times ever' blim-flickered, gol-derned

he read carefully and returned, after which he leaned back in his chair and joined his thumbs and forefingers and smiled more affably than ever.

"But I don't see anything that guarantees a cure within a month, Mr. Clibb," he observed. "Now, I think of it, there was some estimate of a possible time in a letter that I wrote to you before the contract was made, but it was merely an estimate. I thought it possible that the case would require as much as a month to

treat, if I remember rightly. It is quite likely that I underestimated. Well, we must not be impatient, Mr. Clibb. We are going to cure you; we guarantee that. If we fail, we refund your money, cheerfully and promptly, and I hold to my offer of one hundred dollars for any case we fail to cure. I will also pay that providing I fail to cure you, but we must not be impatient. If we can't cure you in one month, we may in two; if not in two, it may be accomplished in three, and so on, progressively. Now to show you that I intend to use you right, I'm going to send you without any extra charge whatever, a dozen more bottles of the Magic Specific, which you will take according to directions, and—"

"Hold on," interrupted Jerry, hoarsely, his little ferret-like eyes glowing with rage. "You mean to say that you aint a-goin' to pay me back my money?"

"Not just yet," said Doctor Flegenson. "We must not be impa—"

"An' I've got to take another dozen bottles of that g-g-g—"

"The Specific," assented Doctor Flegenson.

Jerry uttered a scream of fury, and the Benefactor of Humanity leaped from his chair just barely in time to evade a blow

from one of the paralytic's crutches that would have brained him had it taken effect. He jumped for the door and the crutch smashed against the lintel. Through the waiting room he sped, terror stricken and calling for help, down the stairs and, as he gained the street, a crutch whizzed viciously past his head. Half a minute later, Mr. Clibb, grasping in his gnarled fist the last jagged remnant of his aids to locomotion, collided violently with a policeman.

"Here!" said the official, collaring him. "Where are you going to, Uncle? Who are you going to murder?"

Jerry struggled frantically to release himself. "Lemme go," he shouted. "That skunk has buncoed me outen a hundred dollars. Claimed he'd cure me o' praler-sis."

"Quit your dancin'," said the policeman, giving him a gentle shake. He regarded his raging captive with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

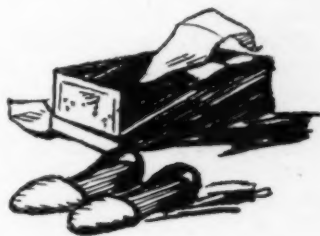
"Well, aint he?" he demanded.

Jerry ceased to struggle, and the fragment of the crutch dropped from his nerveless fingers.

"By jolly!" he exclaimed. "By jolly! If—if I'd only took a club to Doc Hopkins in the fust place!"

## When Idols Fall

THOMAS GRAY FESSENDEN



YOU never would have suspected it of Denny Shea. Seeing him in the retail store of the O-So-Easy Shoe Company, you would have taken him for the meekest and the mildest of colorless little men. This impression would have been height-

ened by the way Denny meekly knelt to slip a number three shoe on a number four foot, the way he scrambled up and down the rolling steps to the stock shelves, the uncomplaining way he let the customers browbeat him and find fault, the apologetic manner he had of saying, "Yes, ma'am," "Certainly,

ma'am," "Now perhaps that same size in just a trifle different last, ma'am."

Denny had mild blue eyes; they were almost beseeching eyes, and they looked at you pleadingly from behind huge steel-rimmed spectacles. His face was very narrow, with hollowed-in cheeks and concave temples. Very high heels and thick inner soles permitted him to measure five feet five when he stood very erect—which he seldom did.

You might easily have taken Denny for the leader of a young men's Bible class, but never in the world for what he really was—one of the most rabid little prize fight "fans" in all the city.

What Denny didn't know about the ring was not worth knowing; he could go over with you every fight of importance that had taken place in recent years, and tell you just what had taken place round by round; he knew the names and the weights and the records of title holders, even way back in the dark ages when gloves were not and the Marquis of Queensbury might just as well have been the founder of some psychic cult for aught people knew of him; and he could "fan" with you by the hour, and no matter how much you thought you knew about the game, a little talk with Denny always left you with the impression that you had learned a whole lot you never knew before.

But Denny, withal, was very level-headed. He took the game for what it was worth, was neither blind to its crookedness nor its commercialism, and absorbed all the news of the ring with a qualifying grain of salt, which is the proper way to do, when you stop to consider it.

Nor had Denny Shea, with all his love of the game and all his attendance at the ringside, ever had an idol. What they might be outside the squared circle he neither knew nor cared, until that day in the shoe store when a big hand descended on his shoulder and a big voice behind him, said:

"Son, I want a pair of vic' kid slippers—number five and very wide. Never mind havin' any of the fancy stuff to 'em. Just the comfortable, serviceable kind; they're for an old lady."

Denny turned. There stood a thick-

set, red-headed, freckle-faced young man smiling at him. Denny would have known that freckled face and the red hair and the tremendous shoulders anywhere. It was none other than Marty Hahir, whose name had suddenly been blazoned forth in the ring firmament of late; and blazoned forth justly, if one considered the good work Marty Hahir had done and the fact that he was as yet to know the meaning of defeat.

"Number five, very wide," Denny repeated. "Yes, sir. We can fix you up, sir. We have the very thing you want, I think."

Up the rolling steps he scurried, snatched a pair of slippers from a box on the top shelf and was back again in a trice:

"You'll find these will give mighty good wear for the price—one-seventy-five. They're one of the best sellers we have."

Marty turned them over in his big hands. "Yep, them's 'um," said he, digging into a vest pocket for the price of them.

"Will you have them in the box, or just wrapped up without it, Mr. Hahir?" Denny inquired.

Marty started, then grinned. His fame was spreading farther and faster than he realized.

"Oh, just put a paper round 'em," he instructed, not at all ill pleased that the little clerk had recognized him and called him by name.

"And what do you think of Grogan's chances against Digger Smith next Thursday?" Denny asked as he wrapped up the slippers at the paper-roll.

That was the beginning. Very soon Marty Hahir had quite forgotten that he had come in for a pair of slippers only. Seated on one of the long, carpet-upholstered seats with Denny Shea beaming beside him, he entered into a fanning bee the like of which he never would have imagined possible from a casual glance at Denny Shea.

Why, the little rooster knew all about the ring game, and every weight and record, too—far more of the latter than did Marty Hahir. Also, he was looking at Marty with a new light in those mild blue eyes of his—a light there was no

mistaking; and Marty Hahir, being, with all his other qualities, very human indeed, was not beyond feeling and basking in the very apparent adulation the little clerk beside him was bestowing upon him.

An hour and a half went by before suddenly Marty jerked out his watch with an exclamation of surprise as he looked at the time.

"So late as that? Have I been here that long?" he said incredulously. "Gee, we've had a great little talk. I've enjoyed it. I'd like to drop in on you again, Mr. —er—"

"Shea," said Denny, all a-flutter, as he took the big paw the other held out to him. "Do! I'll be mighty glad to see you any time, Mr. Hahir."

Marty dropped in soon again on that interesting little clerk at the O-So-Easy Shoe Company's retail store. He began to drop in often. The fanning bees at the back of the store came to be an almost daily occurrence. Denny began to speak authoritatively of what, "my friend, Marty Hahir, says."

It may have been that look of adulation which steadily grew in Denny's eyes, it may have been the fact that he had so much ring knowledge stowed within that bulging forehead of his—at any rate, Marty Hahir was aware of a genuine liking for him; on his part, Denny, quite unconscious of the process, was beginning to set up his first golden calf. They began lunching together, anon, and now and then in company attended some show.

Then came the day Marty dropped round with a couple of tickets to the Bayside Club, where he was to have a ten-round go that evening with Tommy Horan. It was the first time Denny had even seen Marty in action. It was a great little fight, and Marty Hahir's clever work brought yells from some two thousand other throats beside Denny Shea's; but none of them was quite so loud or so jubilant as Denny's, as he watched Marty put his man away with ease.

Thereafter, when Marty fought, and wherever he fought, there was on the benches, a thin-faced, meek little man, who greeted his every blow with piercing yells, and at the conclusion of each fight,

for Marty kept up his winning record, stood up on his seat and fairly rent the air with pæans of victory.

Marty Hahir, undefeated, went steadily up the line. Man after man fell to his prowess, and each one, very naturally, added much to his rapidly growing reputation.

Then came his fight with Drummer McLean, the fight that would perhaps do as much for him, if he won it, as all the fights which had gone before.

There were some great fanning bees those days in the back of the shoe store; and great was Marty's optimism on the outcome of the fight; but even greater was that of Denny Shea.

"Why, there aint a guy livin' of his weight that could stand up before him for ten rounds," Denny declared enthusiastically to an acquaintance. "And I don't believe there ever has been a guy so good at his weight as he is. Talk about your speed and your cleverness. Why, Marty's got 'em all skun fourteen different ways of a Sunday! You watch him. I tell you he wont *ever* be licked. He can't be! He aint one of the kind that ever is!"

Therefore, on the night of the fight, Denny Shea, full of a great and a placid confidence, climbed to his seat in the Fendale Club's Arena, and settled himself comfortably to watch his idol add yet another laurel to his already heavy crown. That he would do it with the greatest of ease Denny Shea had never a doubt as he sat blinking and coughing in the drifting smoke—for Denny never used the weed himself—watching some very tame preliminaries progress.

At last came the main bout of the evening. The announcer said his little say through the huge megaphone, just as the two principals; and their seconds climbed into the ring and sought their respective corners.

"Whee!" howled Denny at the announcement of Marty's name. "Whce! That's the boy, Marty! Eat him up!"

"Whee!" he yelled again as the gong struck, and the two men advanced and shook hands. And "Whee!" he shrieked yet more piercingly as Marty got in the first blow—a loud but harmless whack

on Drummer McLean's hairy chest.

It was a glorious fight—one of the kind that keeps the spectators on their feet, whooping their throats out. It was give and take up to the fifth, with neither man seeming to get any advantage; then, just towards the close of the round, Drummer McLean shot out his right, the right which had brought him fame, caught Marty squarely, and sent him down to the mat with a mighty crash.

A whoop died a strangling death in Denny Shea's tightening throat. He couldn't realize it, couldn't believe it. Marty Hahir was down! But only for a moment. Quickly he was up again, groggy, it is true, but game. He staggered into a clinch; hung on desperately, and was saved by the gong.

"Whee-e-e!" screamed Denny Shea when the crisis was past. "You'll never see that lad down again!" he confided to his neighbor in the next seat, as the men went to their corners at the tap of the gong.

But that right had done more execution than Denny realized. Not that it had hurt Hahir to any serious extent—oh, no, not that! But it *had* given him more than a momentary tremor. When they came out for the next round, Denny noticed a marked change in Marty's work. There was no longer that air of cool, almost careless confidence about him. Instead, he boxed cautiously, nervously, with one eye always on that terrible right of McLean's, and every time it was drawn back, he jumped away like a nervous woman.

Moreover, it took McLean, who was normally quick of wit, no more than that sixth round to discover Marty's fear. He smiled grimly to himself as he walked to his corner at the end of the round.

"Watch me get him this one!" he whispered to his seconds as the summons came for the beginning of the seventh.

McLean was still grinning maliciously as he advanced into the ring. He blocked two quick swings from Marty and then feinted with that terrible right. Marty jumped; but as he did so, so did McLean. Over came his left in a terrific blow, and down went Marty Hahir, prone to the mat.

There was a momentary hush on the benches. Denny Shea leaned forward

with his eyeballs fairly starting from his head; his teeth bit into his under lip until the blood came; the nails of both hands were digging into his palms.

And in that awful hush the referee counted—slowly, inexorably to the "ten" which spelled Marty Hahir's doom.

With that uttered "ten" pandemonium broke loose. Hats went into the air. Cheers and yells and booming shouts fairly rocked the rafters overhead.

But Denny Shea sat silent. His under lip was quivering; his shoulders were stooped; his eyes suddenly overflowed and a mist dimmed the big lenses of his steel-rimmed spectacles. Then, all at once, that white mist before his eyes swam redly. He jumped out of his seat.

"Quit yer shovin', there!" a man just ahead of him bellowed.

Denny pushed the harder in his efforts to gain the aisle.

"Lemme through here! Lemme through!" he panted. His voice sounded oddly. It was half squeak, half sob. The tears were streaming down his face. Men looked at him contemptuously as they made way for him. And so finally he reached the aisle.

Down the steps of it he tumbled and stumbled, bumping into whomever happened to block his way; making queer, choking sounds deep down in his throat, which now sounded like spasmodic sobs, and again like the incoherent ravings of a wild man.

Straight to the ringside Denny rushed. The seconds had lifted Marty's inert form and were bearing it to his corner; across the ring, Drummer McLean, swathed in his bath-robe, was just crawling through the ropes which the referee and his own seconds held apart for him.

Denny, quite unaware that he did it, let out a frightful, piping scream, caught up a chair that had been used in Marty's corner, dived into the ring and wobbled across it, swinging high the chair above his head.

The crowd, filing down from the seats, let out a warning roar.

"Lemme at him! He's licked Marty!" roared Denny, and sped straight at Drummer McLean.

The referee saw him coming, first. He

stepped out and tried to catch the chair. He succeeded; but not in the way he had intended. He caught it on the top of his bald pate and went down in a decidedly undignified heap, from which his two legs kicked out wildly.

With a yell Drummer's two seconds straightened up, and leaped at the oncoming man. One of them landed on top of the prostrate referee; the other crashed through the ropes to the floor outside the ring.

Drummer McLean was no coward, but Drummer McLean, rushed by a maniac who swung a murderous chair, just at that unfortunate moment when he was crawling through the ropes, chose the better part of valor. He sped rapidly down the aisle towards the dressing-rooms beneath the seats, and after him sped Denny.

Whether or not Denny would have succeeded in carrying those threats into effect is, of course, problematical; but before he had proceeded many steps in his pursuit, one of the spectators dropped quickly over the rail which divided the seats from the little slanting aisle to the dressing-rooms, tripped Denny up and sat on him until he could be reinforced by some twenty other spectators, whose combined weight took all the breath out of Denny, and with it his consciousness.

It was two days later that Marty Hahir came sadly into the shoe store. He approached Denny shamefacedly, almost apologetically, yet with the air of a man who has determined what to do.

"Denny," said he, laying a hand on the little clerk's arm, "I'm sorry for you. But we've got to be good sports. We've got to take just what comes, win or lose, and take it with a smile. You hadn't ought to backed me so heavy to win—"

Denny's eyes opened wide.

"Backed you?" he repeated. "I never

put up a cent in my life."

Marty stared at him in unbelief.

"Well, if you didn't have any money up, what in time did you go to raisin' that ruction for and threatenin' to kill McLean, and all that?"

Denny looked at him with those meek blue eyes. The old look of adulation was in them, and with it a look of pain.

"I guess I couldn't stand it," Denny muttered. "I hadn't seen you licked before. I thought you never could be. I was sure of it. And when Drummer got you with that left of his—well, I saw red. I don't just remember what I did after that, though I've been told," he added ruefully.

Marty Hahir muttered something under his breath; then he turned on his heel without a word and left the place.

A half hour later he had found Steve Foley, his manager, at a downtown hotel.

"Steve," Marty was saying, "you've got to go out and get me another fight with Drummer McLean. Yep, I just got to have another go at him."

Some two months after that interview, Denny Shea again quitted his seat at the Fendale Club's Arena at the close of a fight, elbowed his way through the crowd to the aisle and tore down it to the ring-side. Again two men were taking an inert form out of the ring, and again the referee and the seconds held open the ropes as the victor crawled through.

Again Denny sped whooping at the victor, only this time he had no chair. Indeed, he caught Marty Hahir in his arms and fairly hugged him as he yelped in almost tearful joy: "You've licked him, Marty! You've licked him!"

Marty Hahir smiled down at that prancing figure.

"Sure I did, ye bloodthirsty little divil," he laughed. "I *had* to—to save me self-respect!"



# A Bargain and a Woman



by

FREDERICK R.  
BECHDOLT

Author of "Lighthouse Tom," etc.

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ILLUSTRATED BY W. H. D. KOERNER

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**S**ULLIVAN, the bulky first officer of the steamship *Pleades*, laughed and looked into the stream of firelight which flowed between the parted doors of Mother Monohan's stove. It was as if he saw, in the redness, something hidden from the rest of us.

"It's strange," he said suddenly, "the way of a woman."

"Is that wot ye jest found out?" Duffy asked, sarcasm showing in his voice. A general grumble of scorn came from the circle of old sea-faring men.

Sullivan regarded Duffy imperturbably. "Gold made me think of it," he explained. "And them two men up in the Arctic. Aye; 'tis strange, the way of a woman."

"Ye keep hangin' onto that idea as if 'twas your own and new," said Duffy. "Mebbe ye have a yarn behind ut. If ye have not, wot ye've said is about as good as nothin' at all."

"A yarn there is," Sullivan asserted; and now there was something akin to beligerency in his tone, as if Duffy's challenge had stirred him. "Aye; a yarn and I'll spin it to show ye I was right."

"About a woman's ways bein' strange?" Duffy asked scornfully.

"Aye," Sullivan repeated, "wait and I'll tell ye."

'Twas in the old days before the big Klondike rush, when the northern trade was long, slow voyages to salmon fisheries and little out o' the way ports. I had my mate's papers then, and I was with the schooner *Abbie Ford*. A good ship too—lofty and trim. She had been a rich man's yacht in the South Seas.

Well, I was second mate on the *Abbie Ford*; and it was along of that and me knowin' all three parties that I came to understand what I am telling. Some of it I saw, and what I did not see, I got first-handed. So I know.

There were two men and a woman; and there was gold.

Long before I was with the *Abbie Ford*, I knew those three—long before I ever went to sea. We grew up in the same neighborhood, out in the Mission; and the Mission was not as big and crowded as it is now. Dick and Steve and me used to go out into the sand-hills to play Indians with the other little kids when we were in short pants. And Katie went to school in the same room with us.

Ah, well, boys and girls roller skatin' on the sidewalks; and then, first thing we knew, young fellows earning our own livings and women bearin' childer.

Now, way back as far as I remember, this Katie Cassidy was the prettiest amongst all the girls—by a long shot.



"He took me on his back and I fainted."

And as she grew up, she got finer to look at. O' course all the lads they broke their necks to get a dance with her at picnics and the Iron Workers' Union Ball and the like. She surely did have her way when it come to them things.

I cannot say that I was ever badly took with her, for reason of one thing. She was too calculating-like. She had a good head, that girl did; and she had figured over things, laying out her course the way it was to go. She was plain spoken about it too; and all hands understood that she was set on havin' the best there was in life when she come to marry.

It is funny that way with girls; how they will look and plan for what lays far ahead. This here Katie had begun while she was a little kid; and she never give it up. So by the time she got her growth it was well known among the lads that she had set her heart on marryin' a rich man or not marryin' at all. I think it was along of her folks bein' pretty poor; and her havin' to go without, all her life. Anyhow it was so.

She went to work in one of them downtown department stores; and by the time she was nineteen year old she was makin' pretty good wages for a girl—with good chances ahead because of her pretty looks. She was a stiddy girl and she used to give her money to the old folks; though she always managed to hold out enough to put plenty on her back. She had a way of dressin' finer than the other girls—not showy but fine. Ye understand?

So all the lads, they hung around her; and there was always some young feller stickin' about the house of a Saturday or Sunday evenin'. But in the end it come to Dick Flanagan.

It was plain to see that Katie had took a bigger fancy to him than she had to any of the other lads. And natural enough too. A fine, upstandin' lad, tall and slim-built, with a good pair of shoulders and a nice smilin' face. Eyes that was big and happy, like as if he believed that everything was bound to go right in this world. A kind of hopeful fellow. And he had the inside track with Katie.

But, even if he did have the inside track, he was as bad off as the other lads

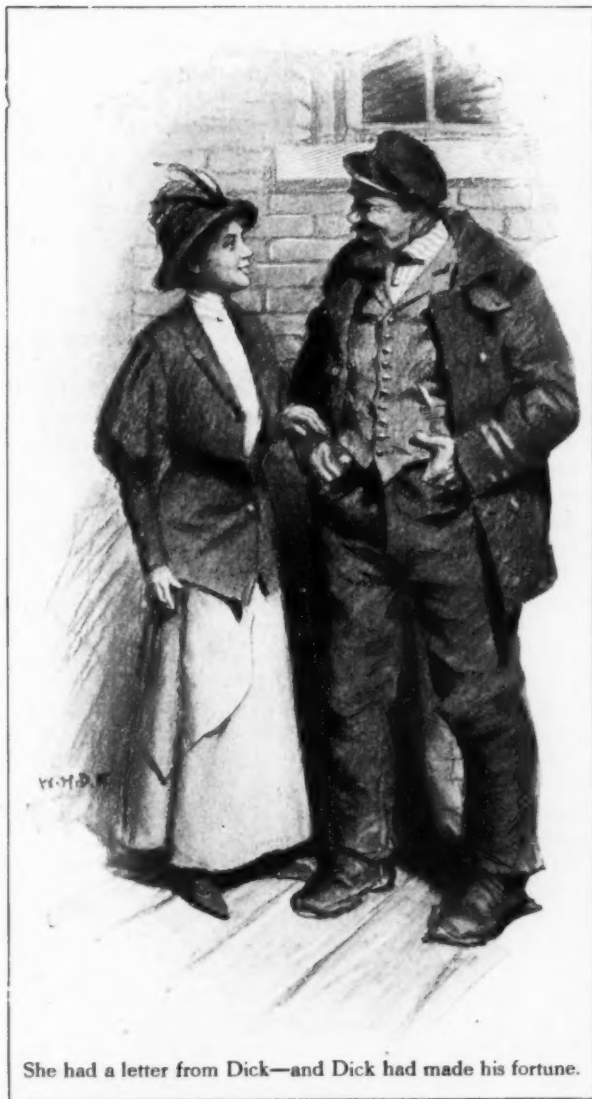
arter all. For he asked her to marry him, and she told him she would never marry a poor man. She said it flat. And so, says he, "Then I'll get rich; I'll make it some way or other."

That was a great sayin' of Dick's: "Some way or other." He was always sure he would do what he wanted, "Some way or other." There's been times when I got mad hearin' him say that so hopeful.

And Katie, she did not like the way he said it either, I take it; for she used him mighty cool for a while; and she let Steve O'Brien see her home from the next dance. But o' course ye know the way them things go. She made it up with Dick the week arter. But Steve was never on the outside again. From that time on he had his even break, him gettin' every Sunday, and Dick every Saturday evenin' at Cassidy's.

This here Steve was a blocky chunk of a fellow, with sharp little black eyes that was set too close together, and a hard look in them. He was one o' the kind that counts his change whenever he gets it, in front of everybody. Good enough lad in his way and he was one o' the gang, and always had been. But them things went again' him with me and with others. He was crazy after Katie. He had been ever sence he was a little kid. As bad as Dick.

That was the way things stood when men begun to talk of gold in Alaska. Ye mind the Cook's Inlet rush? It was then. The papers was full of it; and all kinds of parties was goin' north to make their fortunes. And there was all manner of fool expeditions to Lord knows where. Down on the city front men was sellin' patent rockers and dredgers; and every other store had quartz or nuggets or mebbe only sand in the window. And down in the slips ye could see steamers and schooners and even full rigged ships with big painted canvas signs sayin' they was bound for Cook's Inlet or Turnagain Arm or Prince William Sound. And the decks of them craft was full of men in mackinaws or furs—though it was warm spring weather—and a foot deep in yelpin', fightin' dogs. And all that men knew was that Cook's Inlet was up in Alaska. So if ye said Alaska it set them on fire.



She had a letter from Dick—and Dick had made his fortune.

I do not know jest how it started out there with the bunch of lads in our part of the Mission. I was followin' the sea then, and had been for years past. I only got home by spells, and then not for long at a time. So I did not hear or see the start of it. But the first thing I did know was that a gang of them had got together and chartered a schooner; and they was goin' north to find gold and make their fortunes. Yakutat was the place; and they had word of gold in the beach sands. Somebody had got it from a man he had

run acrost down on the city front; and he had told the rest. Aye. There was a bunch of ten of them, bound for Yakutat; and they was going on the *Abbie Ford*.

So, when I come up home to see the old folks, I got that news. As I was tellin' ye, the *Abbie Ford* was my ship. She had been sailin' coastwise. I heard that the lads had chartered her, and was ready to load her with grub and blankets and all the skin clothes they could rake up money to buy, and picks and shovels and lumber. Lord love ye, it cost them all the cash they had saved and all they could beg or borrow!

All that I heard when I come home. And I heard more. Dick and Steve was in the bunch. And the way they come to be there was like this:

Dick had come to the Cassidy house one Saturday night and he had seen Katie. And, "Katie," says he, "I'm goin' to Alaska and dig some of that gold. I'm goin' to get rich—to make my fortune. I'll come back and then ye'll marry me."

"When ye get rich," says she, "but never a poor man, Dick."

Now most girls, they would of made a fuss and told him not to go and all; but that was all Katie said about it.

The next evenin' bein' Sunday, Steve he come along to see Katie. And he told her the same thing that Dick had told her. Only, o' course, he put it different, bein' a different breed. And she laughed when he told her. Says he:

"Ye laugh because Dick has told ye he is going. If one of us comes back wit' gold and I am that one?"

Says she, "I'll marry the one that

comes back rich." And Steve went away with that promise.

Dick told me that himself; for Katie had told him the next time he went to see her. And she said that she meant it. He told me the day the *Abbie Ford* sailed. I let him know he was a fool for settin' his heart on a girl that was that cold blooded.

Fact is, I did not like the look of her that day. She had come down to the dock and she said good-by to both of them, playin' no favorite. And it was plain enough that it was cuttin' Dick deep under his hide too, the way she acted. Later, when the lines was cast off and the tug was gettin' the schooner out into the stream, she waved her hand at the two of them. They stood nigh to each other leanin' over the rail. And she sung out:

"Remember, the one that comes back with the gold."

Then she turned around and walked up the dock to East Street. Now, who could have any time for a woman that acted that way?

I mind that day, when the tug was takin' us out. A fine, large mornin': the Marin county hills all green and glad-like; the water all dashed with white caps; and a breeze a-hummin' through the riggin'. The lads from the Mission they took one good long look at the old town; and then every last one o' them turned his face the other way and looked ahead. They were that eager! Dick and Steve were keepin' pretty well apart now. Not that there was bad blood between them. But they were like two men in a foot race or a boxin' match; they were too much set on winnin' to be friendly.

So, for the balance of the voyage. Each of them was takin' it in his own way. Steve, he said nothin' to no man. He just kept his idees inside of his own head. Dick was exactly the opposite. He was that full of what he was going to do and that sure of the gold he was goin' to get that he could not help tellin' about it as if he had it already. Many's the night, when I was off watch, that he would lay on deck with me way up forward and we would have a smoke together, a-watchin' the water boil into lines of fire around the schooner's stem. And we would hear it mutter in little ripples

again' the side. And Dick would talk about that stake—that gold he was goin' to get. I told him to hold hard and wait until he got it. He threw back his head and he laughed. "I'll make it," says he. "You wait and see. Somehow, I'll make it."

For all it was fool talk, I could not help but like him for it. He was that glad and hopeful.

So the *Abbie Ford*, she sailed on west and north. And each of them two took it in his own way—Steve walkin' alone and figurin' by himself, Dick tellin' about gold as if he seen it already. And at last we come to the bay of Yakutat, which opens off of the Gulf of Alaska into the mainland.

A wild land it was ashore. Lord love ye! I have seen many parts of the world; but some of that coast beats them all. It is so big that it is lonely. It makes your heart drop inside of ye. And ye feel small and far away from home.

It was like this: A beach dead ahead, flat and red as blood; behind the beach a ten foot bank; behind that bank tall, thick spruce timber—that forest was wild, wild! And behind the woods a-stickin' right up into the sky, such mountains as ye can see nowhere else in North America—Mount St. Elias a-toppin' all o' them, thousands of feet of snow and big blue-green glaciers. To the south'ard, a string of peaks: Lituya, Perouse, Fairweather and Crillon; any one of them a landmark for miles and miles to sea. And this here bunch of Mission lads was goin' to make a stab at that country! I wished them luck; but I was glad that I had not been bit with any gold fever.

Well, they took the cargo ashore in small boats. And they was as happy as so many kids about it too. And when they had landed it, they said good-by. When Dick shook hands with me his eyes was fairly blazin'; he was that sure of what he was goin' to do. Steve was quiet; and his hard little eyes, they seemed like they had grown closter together. His mouth was tight shet, makin' a straight line across his face. And so they left.

That was the last I seen of either of them for many a long day. Yakutat did not lay on steamer routes then. And let-

ters come away from there about twice a year. The *Abbie Ford* sailed south; and I got back to San Francisco. The summer went along. I found a new job—second officer of the steamship *Bertha*. She was chartered by one of the big fur and fish companies.

So I seen a deal of the Alaskan coast, but I seen nothin' more of the bay of Yakutat. And then come the winter, and other things took up my mind. One day, when the spring had come once more and I was in port, I run again' one of the bunch of Mission lads. He looked peaked and about ten years older than when he had left the *Abbie Ford*. He told me that it had been hard lines up there at Yakutat, and as for gold, why the most of them were clean disgusted. They'd found nothing; and they'd come back—all but

two. Them two was Dick and Steve.

"They're breakin' their backs on the beach," says he. "And I think they'll make something. But what they've staked is all the gold there is."

And so I knew them two were stickin' to it and still set on makin' their fortunes. There were some Siwashes livin' about the bay, the lad said; and so I took it that Dick and Steve did not have to see each other unless they wanted to—which I was pretty sure they did not.

That summer passed; and the *Bertha* made voyages out to the west'ard and back. As far as Yakutat went, it was out of the world; and no word come from there, until along in the fall. I was in port and I had gone up to see the old folks. I met Katie on the street. I could see for a half a block how she was glad;

her eyes was full of it. She had a letter from Dick. And Dick had made his fortune. She told me as fast as she could put the words together how he had been workin' his claim on the beach and he had gotten a lot of gold. But that was not all of it. He had something big in sight—the mother lode. He knew where the rock laid that all the placer gold had come from. He would not come down until the spring. Then he would come, the richest man in Alaska.

"Did Steve write?" I asked her. She shook her head. I remembered how I had seen Steve last with his mouth shet in a tight line straight acrost his face.

Well, that winter come and it went on past. And in the springtime the first start of the big Klondike excitement was on; when the news had got out of Carmack's discovery, and all the coast was wild; before the treasure ships had brought the gold down.



A blocky man with long black whiskers; he was packing two heavy sacks of gold.

The Alaska trade was big already, and the *Bertha* went north loaded low. We had a lot of ports to make. And by the time we was done with the west'ard and back on our way to the inside passage, spring was pretty well along.

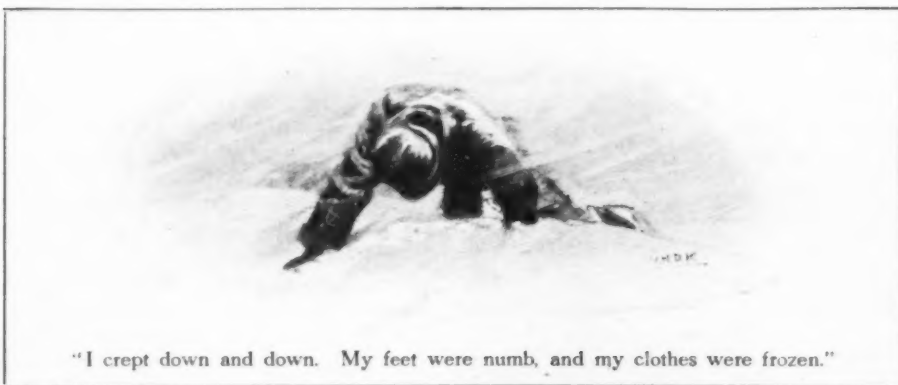
One morning we laid at the Juneau wharf. A handful of passengers had come aboard, and we was about ready to cast off the lines. I was up for'ard looking after something before takin' in the gang-plank. I mind that I was busy; and I happened to see three men coming down the wharf. One o' them was a blocky man with long black whiskers; and he was packin' two canvas sacks. Anyone could tell from the way they sagged his shoulders that them sacks was full of gold. Another was a Siwash; and he was helpin' the third one, who seemed

two coals. He was gaunted terrible. He seen me and he spoke to me in a sort of a whisper; and when I shook his hand it was as cold as a chunk of ice.

"Hello, Sullivan," says Steve; and then he turned his back on me. I called out to the steward and had him give me a hand to get Dick to a stateroom. And I tried to find out what was wrong. But he only shook his head and asked me to get him into a bunk. There was much for me to do jest then; and so I had to leave him. But I did get time to send a flunky for the doctor that was on board.

Now there was a lot of ice from Taku Inlet that mornin'; and I had no chance to bother my head with other's troubles. But after dinner, I got a word with the doctor.

"Scurvy," says he, "and sufferin' from



"I crept down and down. My feet were numb, and my clothes were frozen."

to be mighty sick. I got jest the glance over my shoulder and I did not pay any more attention to them. Sech things as gold and sickness was gettin' common already, ye see.

A minute later I went amidships and give orders for haulin' in the gang-plank. The Siwash was leavin' the ship. The other two men stood on deck; the sacks of gold laid there between them. The bearded feller was talkin' to the purser.

"This gold," says he, "I want it taken to the safe and stowed away for me."

It was Steve! I would not of known him only for his voice.

The other man was leaning again' the rail; he was too weak to stand alone. And that was Dick. His cheeks was the color of putty; and his eyes was fevered like

a bad shock. His feet were badly frozen; but they're saved now all right. The man has something on his mind and it is eating into him, keepin' him from gettin' well."

Then I knew that all that gold was Steve's.

I found Steve in the main saloon; and I got him out on deck where none was near.

"Now," I says, "give me the straight of this. How comes it that one of ye has all the gold and the other is all in?"

He looked me fair in the eyes with them hard eyes of his; and he grinned.

"A bargain," he says, "and ye will have to ask Dick if ye want to know more."

"Fine bargain it looks to me," I told

him. "And if there's aught crooked in it, I'll knock your block off."

"Go ask Dick; it's up to him to tell ye if he wants to," says he. And I left him with that.

Dick was flat on his back in the stateroom. His face was as white as wax, with that putty look in his cheeks. And he seemed like he was too weak to more than roll his head to look at me when I come in. There was something strange in his voice, a flat sound; it was like he did not care. I made shift to talk a little about this and that; and at last I asked him how it come—after him writin' down that he was rich—that he come back broke, and Steve had all the gold. He only shook his head. I did not like the way things looked at all; and so I put it to him again, tellin' him what Steve had said.

"That is right," he says in that tired way, "—a bargain."

So I left him. And the next day he seemed to be a little worse if anything; and so the next day after that. He was jest fallin' off. He acted like a sick dog that wants to go and hide away from all his kind and die alone.

We got down to Victoria and it was gettin' warm and fine on deck. Steve, he walked about, sayin' nothin' to no man; and his mouth was as hard as his two eyes. And always them two eyes was set ahead, as if we could not get down to San Francisco soon enough to suit him. And the sight of that made me mad.

"Your friend in the stateroom," says the doctor to me as we was crossin' the Straits of Fuca, "will do well if he lasts out to sea, the way he is sinking. He don't eat; and I think he never sleeps."

Then I made up my mind to take a long chance; and mebbe I could put some ginger in Dick. Anyhow I was goin' to find out what laid behind this. Two men alone up there at Yakutat—out of the world—and then this here! If it was a bargain, it was a poor trade that Dick had made.

So I went into the stateroom and I took hold of one of Dick's hands; and I give him a strong line of talk. I told him how we had been kids together; and how I knew all his business as well as if I was his brother; and how Katie had

said his letter told her he was coming back rich—havin' found the mother lode.

"She'll be waitin' on the dock," I says.

He looked at me and his face was terrible to see.

"Ye must tell me what this bargain was," I says, "for I have got to know; and if I do not know from you, I'll go and beat Steve up until he gives me the straight of it."

"Steve done what he said; and he done fair." It seemed for a minute or two like that was all I was going to get out of him. But then he begun to talk.

"The mother lode," says he; "that was it. I was not satisfied to work for what I had in sight." He quit again.

"Go on," says I. "I've got to know."

"A Siwash brought it to me," says he. "Late in the summer. A chunk of quartz; and it was all yellow with specks of gold. He told me how he had found it up on the mountain; and I knew it came from the mother lode. I had nearly ten thousand dollars from the beach. I wrote home, and I was sure I would get this too."

"One morning in the fall, I went. I had some grub and my blankets. The Siwash went with me to show me. Ye know them mountains, how they lay. I climbed up and up; and the Siwash said a storm was coming. But the sky was clear; and I was thinking of that ledge. We passed the timber line."

"I made a brush shelter where the spruces end. The rocks went almost straight above me. Up there was the ledge—somewhere. The Siwash left me that afternoon. He would not stay. And I could not see any sign of storm. I slept there that night. I thought of Steve, working down on the beach. We never talked much after the other boys left. We worked all hours. And I knew he had as much as me. I was sorry for him now."

"The next morning I started out from my camp. I could see way out to the west; and it was hazy. But I did not care. I was thinking of the mother lode. And I climbed up, looking for more float like this the Siwash had brought."

"The rock went up and up, almost as straight as a cliff. Up and up; and little gullies down the breast of it where wa-

ter had worn it away. I hung to the brush and climbed. I was wet through and my hands were all tore from the rocks. I didn't care.

"Then I fell.

"I don't know how. I missed my footing; and the brush slipped. I slid and fell, down and down; and then I struck my knee against a rock and that was the last I remember.

"When I woke up, the blizzard was around me—thick around me. I felt the cold biting into my bones; and I could not see ten feet. What time of day it was, I did not know. And when I tried to stand, my leg doubled under me. I had to crawl; and I did not know where my camp lay. I crept on my hands and knees.

"My feet were numb. And my clothes were frozen where they had been wet through. I had to get to my blankets or die. And sometimes I did not know what I was doing; but I wanted to live. I crawled; and I could not feel from my knees on down.

"I come to my senses once and I found I was on top of my blankets under the brush shelter that I had made. I got into them; and I did not know any more till Steve come; I do not know how or when.

I woke up with the light of the fire he had built, in my eyes. He give me some liquor and it made me stronger. I told him how glad I was he had come; how square it was of him to risk freezing to death for me. He did not say anything to that. He cut my boots off of me and I saw I was going to die. My legs was froze up to my knees. And I had laid here too long.



Katie Cassidy just put her arms under his arms and kissed him

"And Steve, he told me the Siwash had come down and said I was up there. So, when the blizzard came, he climbed after me.

"'You are going to die,' he says. 'I will pack you down; but your legs are froze and they will rot. You will die.'

"Like that he said it to me; and I knew it was the truth. And I did not want to die. I begged him to save me; to get the Siwashes and take me down to Juneau where the doctors could do for me.

"He shook his head. He says:

"'I would throw my life away to go to sea in a canoe. I can pack you down. It is chances enough to run. I do not owe you anything—to kill myself that way.'

"I saw it all then. I turned my face away from him and I told him to go.

"When I looked up again he was strapping up his pack—the blankets and whisky and all—and he was getting ready to go. His face was hard.

"But I had to live. It was that way with me. I could not die. I thought of the gold. Then I saw one chance. I spoke to him. I told him if he would get me down and get the Siwashes to take me to Juneau—and if I got well, if he would get me back to God's country,—he could have it all. My gold and my claim.

"'It is a long chance,' he says. 'But twenty thousand dollars is worth it.'

"And that was all he said. But he set to work and he got me ready; and he took me on his back. And I fainted again. One time I came to in the canoe with the sea boiling all around and four Siwashes paddling. And no more until the hospital doctor told me they had saved my legs.

"That was the bargain. And Steve kept his word."

Dick never said any more to me, nor I to him about that bargain. But one thing did come of it. Some way or another the telling of that story seemed to put stiffness in his bones. For he got up the next day.

We steamed into the Golden Gate one mornin'. I was up for'ard as we warped her in. And the passengers—what few there was—was on the deck. Steve was there and he had his two canvas bags of gold, a-holdin' one in each hand. They

sagged his shoulders down. And Steve was a-lookin' at the dock.

There was Katie. She was standin' by herself; and I could see her eyes turned to the boat. She was lookin' for her lover, come back rich to marry her. Well, she had him. But not the one she expected. I told myself it would not make much odds to her.

And there on the deck near where Steve was standin', Dick, with his gaunted face and putty cheeks, was leanin' again' the door of a stateroom and starin' down there at the dock, where Katie stood.

Steve went ashore amongst the last, a-packin' the gold, one sack in each hand. Then a man or two; and then come Dick. He had to hold to a rope on each side of him; and he moved his legs like they belonged to some other man, very slow. Katie she had not seen him yet.

Steve, he landed on the dock. Katie give him a quick look. And Steve he put down both sacks of gold and he opened his mouth to say a word. He never said it.

Standin' up there on the deck I seen Katie's eyes go to Dick. He was jest makin' the last step down. I seen her face change; her eyes grew wide and scared; and then, passing right by Steve and his two bags of gold, she run up calling out:

"Dick! Oh Dick!"

Dick, he had to hang to the end of the gang-plank rope to keep on his feet. I heard him say a word. I heard her cry out. And I seen Steve turn around with a dry, hard smile, and I knew Dick had told her then that Steve had won.

Now it is strange, the way of a woman. She had passed her word to them two; and she had turned her back on them the day they sailed.

Katie Cassidy jest put her arms under Dick's arms and helt him up while she kissed him. And then, with no word to Steve,—not even to say "How are ye?"—she slipped one arm about Dick's back and helped him walk away.

I watched them go up the dock. And then I seen Steve pick up his two sacks of gold; and the weight of it seemed to sag him down more than ever as he started off by himself.

# Mr. Malloy

by CLIFFORD  
S. RAYMOND

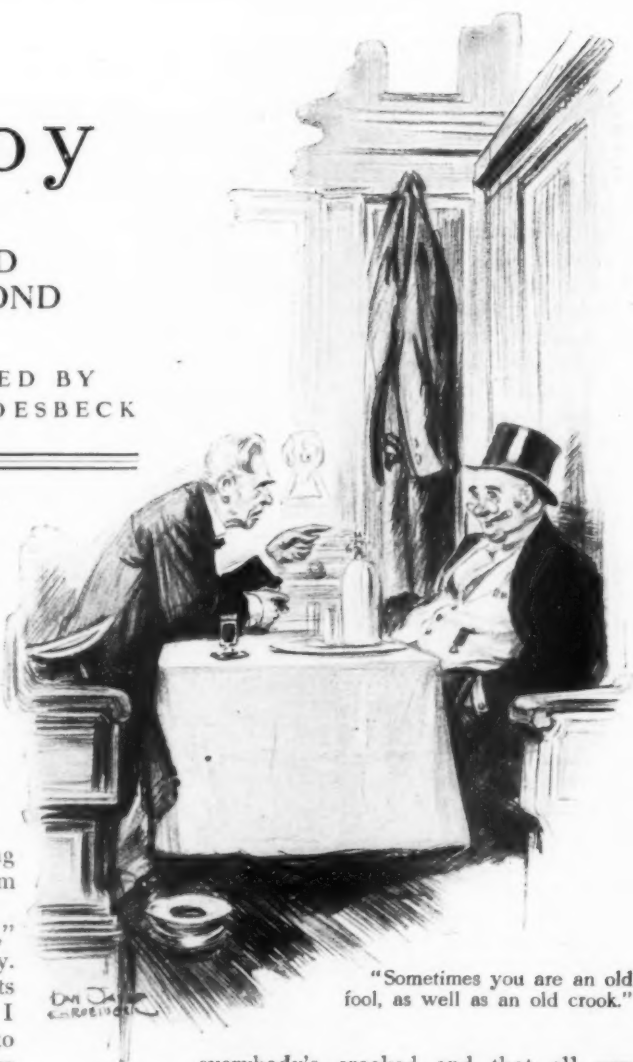
ILLUSTRATED BY  
DAN SAYRE GROESBECK

**D**O C," said Representative Isaac Malloy to Dr. Clinton A. Porget, "sometimes you are an old fool as well as an old crook. You've pussy footed around until you've told Crockett enough to hang us all, and you haven't got his vote. You've let everything out and got nothing in. I'm going to get him myself."

"Go and try it, Isaac," said the doctor amiably. "I don't care who gets him, so he votes right. I can't get the young man to understand that we are trying to offer him a consideration. I'm embarrassed by my reputation—for piety," he added hastily, as if he were shutting a door carelessly opened. "I can't get it through young Crockett's head that I am trying to offer him a thousand dollars for his vote."

"The chances are you've only offered him five hundred dollars and are trying to keep five hundred for Porget."

"No, the young man is honest and he thinks I am, which is a credit to his discernment. You don't seem to think there are honest men in the legislature. That's where you make your mistake. You think



"Sometimes you are an old fool, as well as an old crook."

everybody's crooked and that all you have to do is to chink two dollars behind their ears to have them jump for it. The young man's honest and he thinks I am. That makes it hard work. You'll learn more about human nature some day, Isaac."

"Not down here," said Mr. Malloy.

"No? Well, possibly in the penitentiary. You go get him, Isaac; you go get him, but remember, if you get tripped up, I warned you. I've cautioned you. They're going to catch you sometime, Isaac, and it won't surprise anyone. You'll be receiving visitors on the third Thursday of every month and writing to your

folks once a week, Isaac. You'll be making rattan chairs, but you'll be attending divine service every Lord's day and maybe it will be all for the best. But remember, I've cautioned you. You watch out that Crockett doesn't tell the state's attorney the first thing."

"All right, Doc," said the cheerful Mr. Malloy, "and you watch me land him."

Mr. Malloy was successful. Where Dr. Porget's oleaginous indirectness had failed, Mr. Malloy's honest frankness got him what he wanted. He closed a candid business deal with young Crockett, assured him that one thousand dollars would be given, indirectly as to method, directly as to purpose, for his vote on the street-car bill. Crockett met him with equal candor and sold his vote.

At times the shrewd Malloy was a better judge of men than the shrewd Dr. Porget, possibly because Mr. Malloy had no apostolic reputation to preserve, and for that reason, being more honest with himself, had clearer vision.

He knew that what the doctor had said of Representative Crockett was essentially true. Crockett was honest. If he were bribed he would be frank with himself. He would not try to deceive himself as to the nature of the transaction.

Malloy knew how the influences of the legislature broke down the defenses of some men. He knew how moral protections were dissolved in the legislative chemistry.

There were many honest men in the assembly. Mr. Malloy's pert presumption that a capable man could bribe any one of them did not represent his own opinion at all. If it had been his opinion he might have spent more time in the criminal court than he did in the halls of statecraft.

Mr. Malloy had known a session or two when there were more men who could not be bribed than men who might be, but honesty usually was the chorus and seldom the protagonist.

Roguary furnished the veterans, honesty the recruits. Honesty forever was recruiting and roguary handling the discipline and training. Honesty, inexperienced, came to the legislature with new faces; roguary, returning session after session, always was knowing, trained,

accustomed and familiar. Honesty was an acolyte; roguary always masterful. Honesty was always hopeful, energetic, enthusiastic and hard working; roguary frequently was lazy, indifferent and hard drinking, yet roguary always knew what would and what would not happen, and honesty frequently did not know what had happened until it read the session laws.

Mr. Malloy knew that Crockett ought to remain true to the ideals of the group of young men with whom he had associations and friendships, but he also knew that it was Crockett's second session in the assembly and he knew that some men who had gone through one session honorably, whether because they were strong or the temptations weak, were apt to be pliant in another. Honest men, if not rugged in honesty, and if subjected consciously or unconsciously to the constant suggestion, spoken or unspoken, that legislation might be made profitable, could be thrown off their balance.

The easy, undisturbed good nature of rascality was an opiate to the indignation of even the most militant of the honest members. So much was accepted as inevitable, and it was so hopelessly futile to be in a constant ferment over things always suspected and never proved, that the most aggressive legislative virtue could not be exploding constantly.

Mr. Malloy did not know that Crockett had special, pressing and tantalizing need of money, but in his opinion it was quite safe to single this young man out and deal candidly with him.

Crockett's vote passed the bill. Any one of ninety-eight other men who voted for it might have said the same thing, but Crockett knew that with the others no question of morals had been involved. Their question was merely one of price.

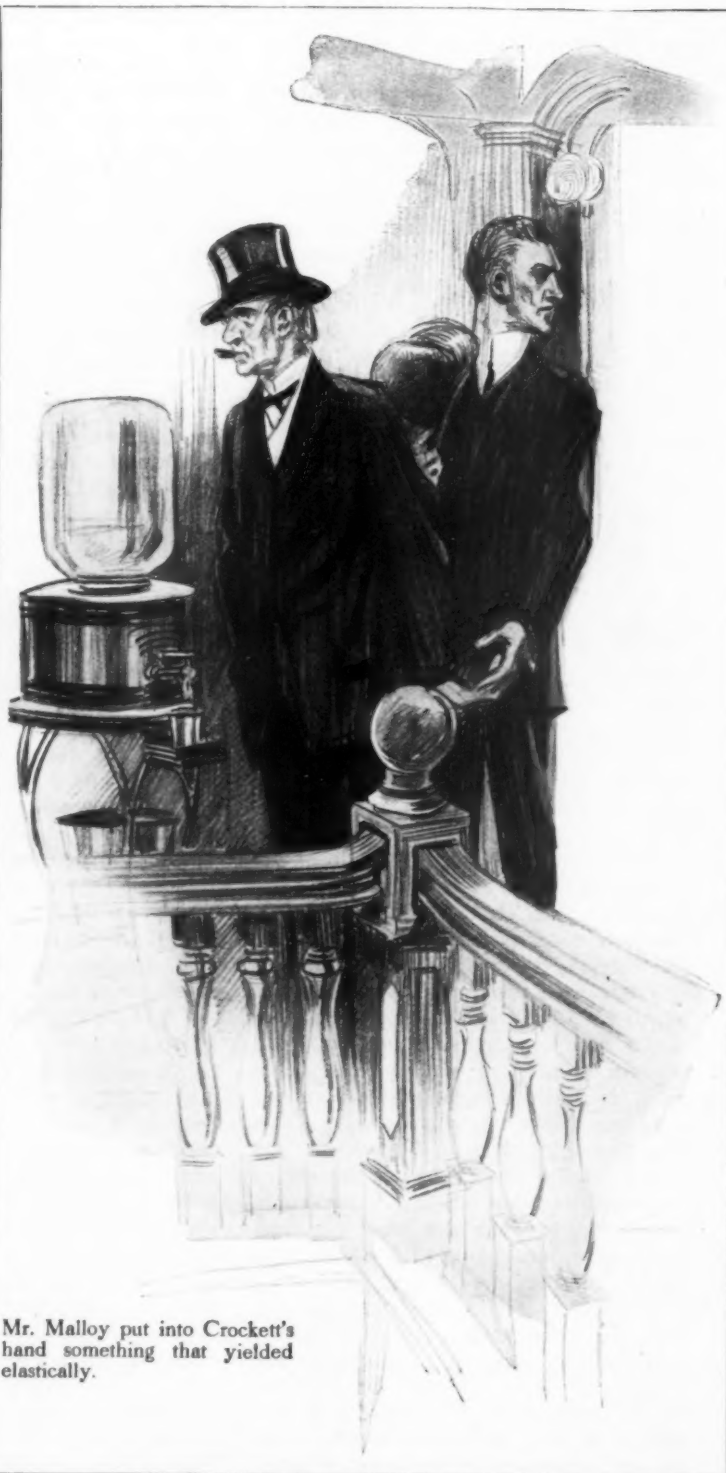
He was not afraid of consequences. He knew that the methods of legislation were safe. No evidence of bribery would be made for a criminal court. He knew that at some time, probably not until after the legislature had adjourned, he would be given a thousand dollars. The payer might or might not be known to him. There would be no reason assigned for the payment. It was safe enough. He had no fear of consequences.

There was some unpleasantness, but not more than he expected. The worst was the contempt which his better legislative friends showed for him.

"Crockett's got nerve," said Malloy to his friends and fellow statesmen, Mr. Timothy Lemon and Mr. Solomon Rutabager. "He took the newspaper roasting like an old timer and he's handed back a few hot shots to his pious friends who tried to haul him up on the carpet. He can put up a good talk for the bill, the best I've heard."

"No one else has tried," said Mr. Lemon. "It's one of the things you do and let the other fellow talk about. That young fellow made a fool of himself or you made a fool of him. He'd have better stayed straight and got out of the legislature. Even if he keeps at it he won't make a good grafter."

"I don't care what he makes," said Mr. Malloy, "but he's got nerve and he didn't get fussed."



Mr. Malloy put into Crockett's hand something that yielded elastically.

"He's the sort of a fellow that goes along all right for a while and then takes to booze fighting," said Mr. Lemon. "He'll be around some of these days trying to touch men who once knew him for dimes and quarters. I know lots like him. You'd have better let him alone."

"I'm not his keeper," said Ike. "They needed his vote and I got it."

Crockett had not considered his future course carefully. He was not troubled by what he had done, but he had not made up his mind whether it was to be a single step aside or the first of many such steps. He needed a thousand dollars. There might have been many pleasanter ways of getting it, but he did not know of any easier or surer. The only regret he had was that he would have to wait for the money. And that was removed by the fact that payment came earlier than he had expected.

As the assembly worked towards its close, night sessions of the House were required to relieve the calendar of a congestion of bills. This work came in conflict with the drinking habits of many statesmen who nevertheless endeavored to give some attention to legislation and not wholly neglect their grog. Their efforts did not add anything to the sobriety and dignity of orderly legislative process. Irresponsible members were apt to be found asleep in their chairs or, worse still, noisy and unmanageable in the aisles. The cares and responsibilities of the Speaker were increased thus. The considerable, considerate and important members of the House were distressed when unprofitable lapses disturbed decorum and invited criticism.

At such times Mr. Malloy was apt to pursue the joys of life recklessly, and usually he brought up at the end of a week in a tangle of complications, serious or merely interesting, from which it needed all the shrewdness of his friend Mr. Lemon to extricate him. For when Mr. Malloy had danced three days with Bacchus all humanity was his plaything.

Mr. Lemon could have warned the unsuspecting against him one night when he saw him enter the hall of the House. Mr. Malloy's demeanor was too studied. His composure was too important. His dignity was too apparently a veneer over

excitement not wholly alcoholic. Tim Lemon could have warned the unsuspecting against the impish Malloy, but he never interfered in Ike's peculiar affairs until it became necessary for him to straighten them out.

Mr. Malloy was enshrouded in mystery. His composure was a remarkable product of severe self-restraint.

The proceedings of the House were uninteresting, and young Crockett, his attention attracted by Malloy's restless movements up and down aisles, watched him with amusement.

Ike popped in and out of the doors to the corridor back of the hall. He had brief whispered talks with unimportant statesmen who in each case followed him to the corridor.

Mr. Squidge Anspaugh, returning from there, came by Crockett's desk.

"I wanted a drink of water," said Squidge. "It's hot work in here."

Mr. Anspaugh obviously considered it important that this should be understood.

Mr. Snicky Ahern, re-appearing from such a brief excursion, looked as if he would like to make a public explanation that he had gone for a drink of water.

Mr. Gus Ritzner was beatific when he came back and was unable to conceal the fact. Statesman after statesman was drawn out of his seat by the magic of Mr. Malloy and was filled with a new enthusiasm for life, an enthusiasm showing through an evident desire to disguise it.

Crockett had become much interested and considerably puzzled when a page came to his desk.

"Mr. Malloy would like to see you in the corridor by the water cooler," said the boy.

Crockett found Ike leaning against the wall with his hands carelessly thrust into his coat pocket.

"What do you want, Ike?" he asked.

Mr. Malloy looked up and down the corridor cautiously, drew one hand quickly from his pocket and put into Crockett's hand something that yielded elastically to his instinctive clutch on it.

"There's your street car money," said Mr. Malloy and walked away.

Crockett put the roll of bills in his

pocket without looking at it. Now that he knew what had happened to the twenty or more men who had preceded him into the corridor he did not have the courage to re-enter the hall. He knew that he would not look as if he had been for a drink of water. Too many men had been to the cooler before him.

He went around the hall by a side corridor, got his hat from the cloak room and walked down the steps to the main floor and out on the capitol terrace.

He wanted to look at his money and his isolation permitted it but his impulse to count it seemed too brazen. The roll

made a fat, distended handful. The bills were numerous and evidently not of large denominations. He saw the figure 10 in the corner of the topmost and, pulling that bill off, he put it in his vest pocket. The roll he put back in his trousers' pocket.

He had barely glanced at the money. He stood behind one of the columns of the portico in the shadows. The terrace, the walks and the lawn were deserted and he might have taken his time in examining his spoils of statecraft but he was uncertain of himself. He felt like a sneak. It was not pleasant. He felt dirty, mean and low.

This annoyed him. He had not had any such sensations when he agreed to sell his vote, nor any such when he delivered it. He was provoked that he should be a ninny when he came into possession of the money for which he had sold himself. He had not counted this experience among his prospects. He did not have the courage to go back into the hall of the House. Malloy had taken a disagreeable way of making the payments. Crockett found his exasperation increasing. He decided to get a drink and spend some of the money. That might help him pull himself together.

He walked to the nearest saloon ordinarily frequented by legislators. Its usual *habitués* were missing, partly because of the night session and partly because of the attraction of the night itself. The bartender, whom Crockett knew vaguely as Gus, had no customers. He wiped glasses and whistled.

Crockett asked for whisky and cigars. He took the ten dollar bill from his vest pocket and laid it on the bar. Gus



He crouched behind the barrel, waiting for the legislators to pass.

picked it up as he turned towards the cash register, straightened out its folds, looked at it and became both embarrassed and mirthful.

A finer sense of delicacy told him that the grin overspreading his face was not tactful. He endeavored to control it. He held the bill up in his fingers.

"You're stringing me," he said.

That possibility seemed to him to allow a loophole of escape to his customer.

"What's the matter?" Crockett asked.

"There's been two or three of these in here before to-night," said Gus. "Maybe you didn't look at it. See."

He offered it for inspection but Crockett was too astonished to examine it. He looked at it but his perceptions were not responsive.

Gus, who had a considerate and kindly disposition, loath to witness another's embarrassment, said awkwardly:

"It's a joke, I guess."

"A what?"

"Well, I dunno,"—Gus was in perplexity. "Two or three other fellows have been in here to-night joking about Confederate money and Ike Malloy. One of them was pretty mad. I guess Ike's been at it again."

Crockett struggled to conquer a sudden vertigo as the face of the ten dollar bill photographed itself on his consciousness—a curious phenomenon: everything in the room passed into a misty fog and even Gus was dim in a haze, but the absurdity of the bill as legal tender stood out sharply and mockingly in every detail; this, all of a sudden and without warning to him. It was clear; the rest was blurred.

"Let's see it, Gus," he said—and wondered who was speaking from a far corner of the bar-room. "Why, that's Confederate money. I've had that for six or seven years. I was showing it to some fellows to-day and must have got it down with the real money. That's a joke on me."

To Crockett this was a mockery of plausibility but it was the best he had in his desperate need.

"It's funny, isn't it?" he asked. Luckily he did not try to laugh.

"The other fellows were talking about Malloy," said Gus, "and a couple of them cussed him. You can't tell what Ike

will do towards the end of a session. He plays tricks. Now you know where he is and now you don't."

"It's funny how that happened," said Crockett unsteadily. "I'd better tear this up before I try to pass it again. Here's real money."

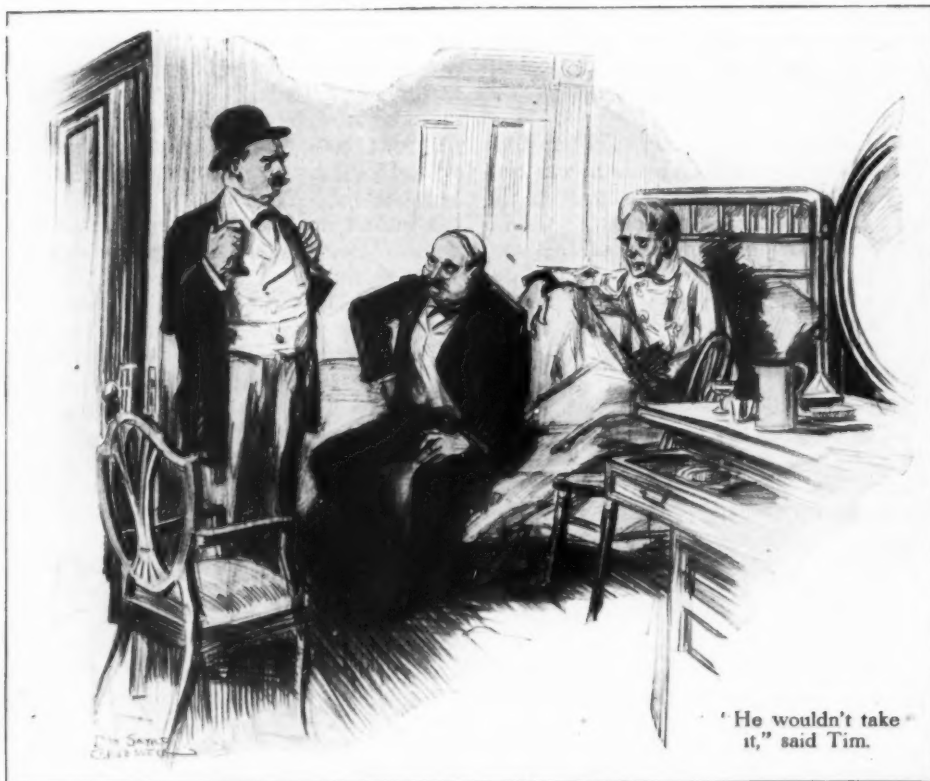
Crockett made an effort at an unconcerned "Good night," but was trembling when he reached the sidewalk.

He felt like a wounded animal and his instinct was animal—to get to cover. He turned thoughtlessly towards the capitol and did not realize that this was a mistake until the noisy approach of many men brought him to his senses. The House had adjourned. Ike's joke must be known even to the prohibition member—which was the *ultima thule* of widespread information in statecraft.

The coming of the statesmen was like the debouching of tipsy troopers into the streets of an occupied town. They were shouting in laughter. Distinct outbreaks of profanity betrayed victims. Crockett's terrified eyes took in one group under an electric light. Two men leaned against a pole as if they were feeble from merriment. Three hung together for support. One stood and thrashed his arms about, unashamed, demonstrant, voicing angry emotions frankly.

Crockett sought safety. He did not dare turn and run. He did not dare meet the crowd in front. An alley offered asylum. He stepped aside into it, discovering it to be blind. Light from the street lamps was bright at its entrance. The moonlight illuminated the interior. He was in a panic, fearing discovery. As he hesitated irresolutely, looking about for cover, he saw an ash barrel. The shouting, laughter and profanity in the street had neared the mouth of the alley. He abandoned himself to instinct and crouched behind the barrel, thus waiting for the legislators to pass.

It was no consolation that he was one of twenty who had been sacrificed to make this joy. He felt hunted. The shouting died away. The street was becoming safe. He was about to venture out when voices, not riotously happy but quarrelsome, drove him back. He recognized the disputants—Lemon, Malloy and Rutabager. They walked slowly.



"Who else?" he heard Lemon ask.

"That's all," said Malloy.

"Shake your memory. Who else?"

"No one—except Crockett."

"Crockett?"

"What's the harm?" asked Mr. Rutabager. "He had it coming."

"And you delivered Crockett's vote. You miserable little runt."

They went on and out of hearing. Crockett came from behind the barrel. The street was silent. He was undiscovered in his emergence. He felt light-headed with shame and did not dare take a chance of meeting any of the men who knew how he had been sacrificed to make legislative joy. He walked the streets and rested on benches in the little parks until four o'clock in the morning. Then he risked whatever embarrassments might wait him in the hotel lobby, encountered no one and came undiscovered to his room.

When he awoke it was afternoon. The consciousness that he must meet the men he had avoided the night before was with

him but he had regained confidence in himself. He had to face them. He would do it as indifferently as he might.

He was nearly dressed when there were several gentle raps at his door. He opened it and admitted Lemon. Tim Lemon made no attempts at evasion. He closed the door, saw that the transom was shut and went directly to his purpose.

"Crockett," he said, "Malloy has an apology to offer as soon as you are ready to receive it. It was his idea of a joke last night. You are justified in any feelings you may have, but don't exaggerate the effect of it. Most of the fellows spent the night drinking with him. When he is able to get out of bed I'll bring him around to you. His sense of humor is misguided at times. I hunted for you last night but couldn't find you. I wanted to leave this with you."

He laid an envelope on the table beside which they stood. Crockett picked it up and, without opening it, handed it back.

"I walked the streets last night," he



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said. "That's why you couldn't find me. I don't want this."

"Don't be sentimental, Crockett," said Mr. Lemon. "Of course you are indignant, but money is money just the same."

"I'm not sentimental and I'm not indignant, Lemon. If anything I'm grateful to Ike. I told you I walked the streets last night. That was because I was ashamed to be seen. The only person I'm ashamed to see now is myself. I didn't

"I'm not afraid. I'm paid. I'm better paid than you can imagine."

"But you've got the blame. You can never persuade anyone that you were not bought. You've got the reputation. Take the money. It's all you can possibly get out of this except the worst of it."

"I don't want it, Lemon, I tell you. See,"—he reached into his trousers' pocket and brought out a great handful of crumpled bills,—“there it is. You know



"I walked the streets last night," he said.  
"That's why you couldn't find me."

know a man could feel so dirty. Don't worry about me, Lemon. I'm paid. It was Confederate money, but it was all I want."

"You are allowing yourself to be emotional," said Tim, half in urgency but altogether coolly. "Don't be foolish. There'll never be any talk about the affair of last night. Some fellows may josh you, but that's all. There's nothing to be afraid of."

what it is—Confederate. I've been paid. I've got a vestige or two of what I need more than I need what you've got in that envelope."

"Meaning your self-respect, of course," said Lemon. He seemed to be amused and he took the envelope. "Crockett," he continued, "I believe if I had sold myself for a thousand dollars, I'd complete the transaction by taking the money. Ike played a joke on you last



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night, but nothing like the one you're trying to play on yourself. Even Ike intended that at some time you should get the money. Of course you may do as you like."

"I don't want it, Lemon. I don't like to offend so practical a man as yourself by seeming sentimental, but that's the way the matter stands."

"Just as you please. I objected to your going wrong in the first place, which may surprise you, because I didn't think you had nerve and because I did think you were emotional. Now that you've done everything except get what you've earned I'd advise you to take the grapes. You've been through the poison ivy. Maybe I'm too practical, but that is the way it seems to me."

"I can understand you. I don't seem to have your appetite for grapes now."

"You've got two chances the way you're going, Crockett, if you don't mind my saying so. One is to be a shyster lawyer chasing ambulances and earning about a thousand dollars a year. The other is to be a very finished specimen of a grafter. I wouldn't want to guess which you'll be."

"You're a bad judge, Lemon. You're getting Confederate money right along and don't know it. I've had all I want of that feeling."

"Maybe you're right," said Mr. Lemon. "Maybe I never had the sense to see it."

"Your irony is rather futile," said Crockett. "Whatever chances I take will be the chances of being honest. You extraordinary fellows may be able to get away with it. I like to shave in peace. I don't want to shave a grand jury and state's attorney every morning for the rest of my life. You're a pretty dirty lot, Lemon, and I don't envy you your profits. I'm done."

"Your emotions do you credit," said Mr. Lemon, "but how about this thousand dollars?"

"I told you I didn't want it. That's all I can say."

"I just wanted to make sure. Good-by, Crockett. You needn't feel too embarrassed about the joke. It isn't the first thing of the kind Ike's done."

Tim carried the envelope, unopened, away with him. He held it in his hand for a moment and then put it in his pocket. His smile was that of a man who unexpectedly finds himself richer by a thousand dollars, collected from the predatory rich for instant payment as a salve to an outraged nature.

In his room he found Mr. Malloy, only vaguely repentant, and Mr. Rutabager.

"How about it?" Sol asked.

"He wouldn't take it," said Tim. "He's turned reformer."

"In which case," said the mercurial Ike, "you can split that thousand dollars three ways. We're that much ahead."

CLIFFORD S. RAYMOND has struck an entirely new note in the handling of stories of the devious ways of legislators and legislation. Underlying the humor with which he clothes his stories, there is a really big philosophy. There will be another of these stories in next month's RED BOOK. It's as good a story as "Mr. Malloy"—and that is saying a lot.

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Fairfax stood erect. "What's the use?" he asked.

# In the Chivalric Years

by CRITTENDEN  
MARRIOTT

Author of "Sally Castleton," etc.

**T**HE Yankees came very suddenly — so suddenly that Mollie Cassidy's eyes widened in amazement. She had just come to the front door after putting the last pan of beaten biscuits into the oven, and neither from the kitchen nor from the porch had she heard or seen anything to warn her. At the rear of the house she had noticed only the kindling tree trunks casting enormous shadows across the turf and against the weather-beaten stable; at the front, blinded by the radiance of the setting sun, she had seen only the silhouettes of a few boys and negroes tramping back across the bridge from

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escorting the retreating Confederates out of Leesville.

And already the Yankees had come to take the vacated places. "Why!" gasped Mollie. "They've been waiting and watching for our men to go. I just know they have! And" — viciously — "it's exactly like them!" Mollie was very young and very emphatic.

For a moment she watched the dusty cavalymen going into camp beneath the shadow of the flagpole that only that morning had flaunted the Confederate colors. Then she turned and walked into the house.

"Archie wont be here to-night, Mother," she announced, wrathfully. "The

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Yankees have taken possession, and of course he can't come."

"The Yankees! Oh, Mollie! Not really?" An old gentlewoman came limping forward, leaning heavily on a cane. Her face was seamed with swift regret.

"Yes! It's too mean. Just when Archie was coming—Mother!" The girl broke off, catching her breath sharply. Every particle of color had fled from her cheeks. "Mother! Mother!" she gasped. "Archie will know our men have gone, wont he? He wont run in on the Yankees without knowing it, will he?"

"Of course not! Of course not!" Mrs. Cassidy spoke quickly. Her voice sagged, but she stoutly forced it up again. "Archie wont do anything so silly as that. Of course he wont! Of course not! How foolish of you to think such a thing, Mollie." The older woman ran on, repeating herself unconvincingly. A child would have guessed that she believed that this was the exact sort of thing that headlong Archie Fairfax would do.

Mollie was not deceived. She was not even listening. With swift precision her imagination leaped onward. "He *will* come," she declared with conviction. "I know he will. He may blunder in or he may come knowingly; but he will come. He wrote me that he would and he will—if it's only to show off." The girl stamped her foot. "Oh! I'd like to box his ears," she cried. "He never did have a bit of sense, and since he's been going and coming so much through the Yankee lines he thinks he can go anywhere. He'll come and the Yankees will catch him. I've just got to stop him!"

Impulsively the girl darted to the door, catching up a sunbonnet and shawl as she went.

"I'll go to Uncle David's," she explained, hurriedly. "Archie must come by there. It's all right, Mother. There's no danger. The Yankees wont hurt me."

The sagging gate at the front creaked loudly, then swung shut with a bang. Footsteps sounded on the gravel walk, on the steps, on the porch. The two women clung together, staring at each other with questioning eyes. Could it be Archie already? Not till the visitor had knocked twice did Mollie go to open the door.

A man stood there in the lamplight, cap in hand. He was slim, sunburned, and young—almost as young as Mollie. Beneath the dust on his uniform yellow stripes and gilt braid showed dully.

He looked into Mollie's indignant eyes and his own twinkled.

"I know I'm a miserable Yankee," he said, humbly. "And I know you can't be glad to see *any* Yankee. But I do wish you'd be gladder to see me than any other Yankee. *I'm* dreadfully glad to see *you* again."

He looked at the older woman, but he spoke to Mollie. He seemed very boyish, and his smile was very compelling. It was not altogether easy for the women to remember that he was an enemy and must be treated as such. Besides, the relief of finding that he was not Archie Fairfax counted for something. Mollie did not speak, but in spite of herself the lines around Mrs. Cassidy's lips relaxed. "I wont say that I'm glad to see you, Captain Winslow," she said, gently. "But I will say that I wish all Yankees were like you."

"Thank you! That's better than I dared to hope. Now, Miss Cassidy, wont you say something nice, too?" The boy's tones were light, but his eyes were anxious.

Mollie hesitated. She was wild to be gone, but she dared not show it. From under her long lashes she stole a glance at the newcomer. If it was art, she did it very well. "Of course, I will," she declared. "I'm like mother! I wish all the Yankees were as ladylike as you."

The boy flushed. Then he laughed. "That's what I get for fishing!" he admitted, ruefully. Admiringly he studied the flushed features half hidden in the depths of the sunbonnet. Then his face fell. "You're not going out, I hope!"

"For a few moments only. I'll be back soon. You'll stay to supper, wont you, Captain Winslow?"

The boy hesitated. "I will if I can," he smiled. "I'm on special duty, but"—he glanced at his watch—"I think I can spare the time." He laughed and advanced into the room. His face was flushed and the eyes he turned upon the girl were adoring.

She did not seem to notice. "Sit down,"

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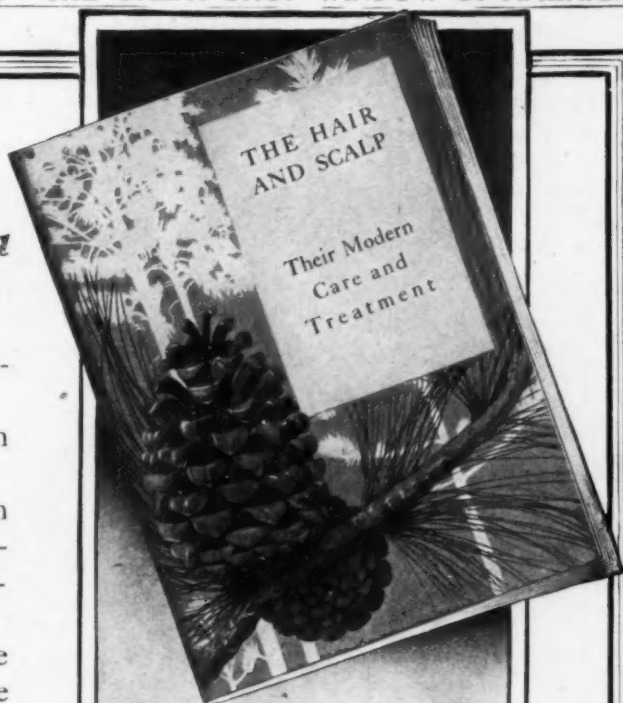
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"Beg pardon, Miss; but nobody's allowed to leave town without a pass."

she said, "and entertain Mother, while I do my errand. No, thank you, don't come with me. It's girl's business. No male assistance is desired." With a nod and a smile she slipped out of the door and closed it behind her.

Brief as had been the interval since she had entered the house, it had brought about a complete change of scene. The

swift-paced Southern dusk had spread itself over the village, softening the dusty road, the broken fences, the trampled common into amethystine distances and perfumed gloom. Light still lingered in the western sky, but toward the east pallid stars were already creeping out. In the square a hundred fires flickered, appearing and disappearing as troopers passed and re-passed before them. The air was filled with sounds; the murmur of voices, the clatter of dishes, the staccato laughter of men, now and then the hoarse challenging of sentries.

Mollie went on swiftly. Her Uncle David's house was only a mile out of town, but the approach of night made haste necessary. She passed the common and walked on between the scattered houses that bordered the road, straining her eyes in search of a possible picket, but seeing none. The edge of the town was close at hand, when from behind a clump of bushes a man in blue uniform rose abruptly, rifle in hand.

"Beg pardon, Miss," he said, respectfully. "Nobody's allowed to leave town without a pass!"

Mollie paled. "I only want to go to my uncle," she panted. "He lives a little way out. Surely you won't stop me."

"Sorry, Miss, but it's orders. Better see the officer of the day, Miss."

The man's tone was definitive. Mollie



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recognized that argument would be useless. Without a word she turned back. There were other roads; perhaps they were still unguarded. She walked swiftly townward, turned into the cross street and again essayed the passage to the open country. But once more she was stopped.

Half mad with anxiety, she turned to try a third exit. But before she had gone a block toward it, she saw a man coming toward her. Automatically she shrank back into the shade, hoping he would pass on.

But he halted instead. "Who's there?" he challenged, sharply. "Come from under those trees and show yourself. Quick now!"

Mollie stepped out. "Good gracious! How fierce you are!" she declared. "You 'most frightened me to death!"

The man drew himself up; then he relaxed. "Miss Cassidy!" he exclaimed, joyfully. "What on earth are you doing out here?"

"I might ask you the same question." Sauciness spoke in Mollie's tones. "I left you to take care of mother. Why have you deserted, sir?" The girl moved slowly along.

Without hesitation the young man fell into step beside her. "I had to," he explained. "I'm on special duty, you know. Let's not speak of it. You wouldn't like to hear it."

Mollie's eyes flashed. "If you are ashamed of it," she asked, "why do you do it?"

Winslow stopped short. Then he moved on again. "Why? Why?" he echoed. "Why do we all do what we are doing? Why are we all here? Do you think it gives any of us pleasure to ravage this country—burn and kill and destroy? It is our own land we are ruining! What if our actual homes are a thousand miles away? This is part of our country. It's all America—one land, one people, one God! And it must stay so. That's why we are fighting. That's why we must fight—though it breaks all our hearts." The boy spoke vehemently.

Mollie's heart throbbed. She had not expected a reply like this. Panic-stricken, she uttered the first words that rose to her lips.

"Your hearts!" she jeered. "Your hearts!"

Winslow turned on her. "Yes, *our* hearts!" he declared, bitterly. "*Our* hearts! My heart! Oh, I know what you think of me! I know what your people think of mine. I know how many years and years it will take to fill the graves this war has dug between North and South. For six months—ever since I left this place last spring—I have never lain down and never risen without an ache at my heart. Day after day, week after week, I have thought of nothing but you—you—and I have known that every hour of war put you farther and farther from me. Oh, yes, I am paying. Some pay in one way; others in another. I am paying with my heart."

Mollie gasped. Not even to herself had she admitted such a possibility as this! How did he dare? Desperately she sought for words to crush him—and found none—and abruptly she realized that she wanted to find none. He was too honest, too genuine, too true-hearted. If only he were not a Yankee—

Impulsively she turned toward him. "I—I"—she began desperately. "You mustn't talk to me in that way. I *do* like you, but—" She trembled and grew dumb. The rich color rioted from throat to brow.

The boy stopped. All his heart was in his eyes. "I know," he said, humbly. "I know. You are sorry to give pain, but—but—" He straightened up. "I leave at midnight, I think. I do not know where the war will take me, but if I live I will come back. And I wanted you to know." Tremblingly but deliberately he bent down and kissed her upturned lips. He was very young.

Then he straightened up. "I am in your debt," he said. "If ever the chance comes I will repay. Yonder is your home! God bless you and yours! Good-by!" He raised his hat and turned away, stumbling a little as he went.

Silent, motionless, dazed, Mollie stood and let him go. He was right! She knew it. He must go, but— Her pretty, disheveled head dropped lower and lower. A sudden mist of tears blinded her.

Then at last she turned into the house; and there in the big living room she

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found Archie Fairfax, with his long legs thrust beneath the table, devouring his supper as if he had no other care in the world. He, too, was young—to all appearances not more than twenty-three or four.

When Mollie entered he sprang up and darted toward her. "Mollie, girl!" he cried. "It's bully to see you!" He bent to kiss her.

But Mollie shrank away. Perhaps the remembrance of the other kiss that lay warm on her lips restrained her. Perhaps the moment was not propitious. "Stop!" she cried. "What are you doing here? I'm angry." Her eyes were wet and suspiciously bright.

"Well! I think you might kiss a fellow after all this time!" grumbled the other. "But if you wont, you wont." He re-seated himself at the table and held out his plate to Mrs. Cassidy. "I'll take that drumstick, please, lady!" he said.

But Mollie was in no mood for lightness. She leaned forward and spoke in tones that left no doubt as to her feelings.

"Shame on you, Archie Fairfax!" she cried, "to torture us so by your silly bravado. Don't you know the Yankees are here?"

"Oh, yes! I know it now. I didn't know it till I was inside the house. It's perfectly disgraceful how lax the Yankees are! I rode into town without being halted."

"Yes! You rode *in*. But you wont ride *out* again so easily. Every road is guarded, but the guards are hidden. Do they know you are here?"

"Of course not. I shouldn't be here if they did."

The girl stamped her foot. "I mean do they know you were coming?" she explained wrathfully.

The young man laid down his knife and fork, and whistled low and long. "Holy Moses!" he exclaimed. "I shouldn't be surprised if they did. They're real vexed with me, you know. Last night they chased me and I had to run for my life. I dropped your letter telling me to come to see you and I reckon they got it and—"

"That's it! That's it! That's why they came." The girl's voice broke. "Oh! it

was cruel and wicked of you to come after that," she sobbed. "Cruel and wicked to take such risks just to show how brave you were!"

Archie jumped up and ran to the girl. "Oh, don't cry, Mollie, dear," he begged, catching her in his arms. "Don't cry; please don't." He stroked her hair softly. "I told you the truth, Mollie! Honest, I did! I didn't know the Yankees were here till I was almost at the door. And when I did know I thought I might just as well come in and get something to eat. I was starving. But I'm going now. Kiss me good-by, Mollie." He bent his head and the girl clung to him passionately; lips pressed lips, while Mrs. Cassidy looked on in terror-stricken silence.

None of the three heard the door open, nor saw Captain Winslow come slowly into the room, and stand gazing with sick eyes at the scene before him.

The young fellow's face was haggard with pain. The thought of Mollie and of what he had come to do—of what he must do—sickened him. For a moment he clung dizzily to the door knob; then, desperately, he forced his weakness back and spoke quietly.

"Captain Fairfax!" he said.

Mollie sprang away with a scream. Archie was quicker to understand. Quick as thought he whipped out his pistol.

"Hands up!" he panted. "Hands up. Turn your back. Step over to that wall! Quick now!"

Winslow did not move. He seemed not to hear. His pistol hung in his belt, but he made no attempt to draw it. Rigidly he stood, his eyes big with a horror that carried no trace of fear.

So evident was it that he was not thinking of himself that Fairfax hesitated. "Put up your hands," he gritted, again. "I don't want to kill you, Winslow. You're an old friend, but—"

Winslow shook his head slowly. "No," he said, hopelessly. "It's no use. We've got you, Fairfax. You can't escape."

"Can't I?" Archie laughed fiercely. "Put up your hands! For the last time—"

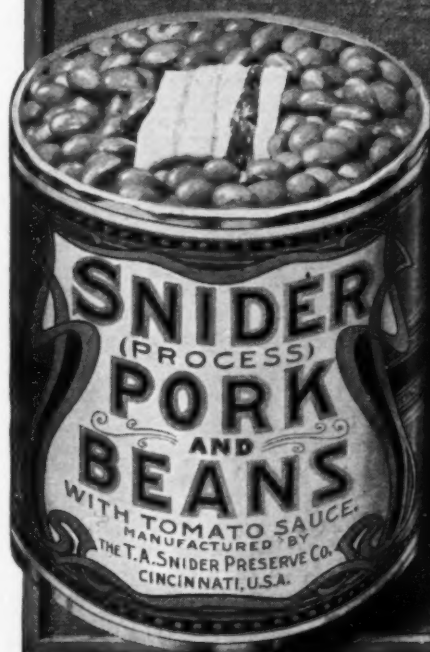
"No. It's useless, I tell you. We've been after you for weeks. We captured a letter last night,"—the speaker glanced at Mollie,—"*a letter that made us think you might be here to-night. So we flanked*

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the Confederates out and took possession of the town. From the instant you entered town you have been followed. Judge if we have left any loophole for your escape."

Mrs. Cassidy's hand had fallen back against the chair. Only her terror-stricken eyes seemed to live. Mollie stood panting; unceasingly her eyes roved from one man to the other.

For an instant Archie hesitated; then he took a quick, sidelong step to the window and peered out. Soon he came back. "It's true," he said, laughing harshly. "You've got me."

Winslow sat down, resting his hands upon the table. He seemed in a worse state than the Southerner.

"Yes," he said, dully. "We've got you. The house is surrounded. A cry, a shot—or even too long a silence—will bring my men in. And then—Sit down!"

The other two glanced at each other. Then, with a shudder, Mollie dropped into chair, laid her arms upon the table, and hid her ashy face upon them.

But Fairfax stood rigidly erect. "What's the use?" he asked. "Call in your men and have it over with. No doubt you are proud of your work!" The sneer was unworthy; Archie regretted it even as he spoke. But the shadow of death lay upon him.

"Proud of it!" Mollie sprang to her feet, panting. "Proud of it! No. He is not proud of it. No one could be proud of such work as this—not even one so low as he." She flung out her hand. "Oh! you cur! You unspeakable cur!" she cried. "You come to this house and claim its hospitality. You come with lies upon your lips and treachery in your heart. You follow me through the streets. You spy upon me. You cajole me, trick me. You dare to prate to me of love. You dare to—to—" She choked, then went on: "Oh, I never dreamed that even a Yankee could fall so low as you! Call in your guards. Win your triumph. Take your reward—the promotion and the blood money. You've earned it. Oh, yes, you've earned it. But, as God lives, I would rather be Archie Fairfax on my way to the gallows than you, triumphant, honored—honored—"

"Stop!" Winslow threw back his head.

"Stop! I did not know that Archie Fairfax was anything to you," he panted. "I did not dream that he was coming to this house. The letter found was signed only by a single initial. I know it was a woman's writing, but I knew nothing else. I did not follow you to-night. I was making the rounds to make sure that the guards understood their orders to let all in and none out. I met you by chance. What I said was true—every word of it. You must believe me—Don't you believe me?"

Unflinchingly he looked into Mollie's eyes. "Don't you believe me?" he questioned once more.

Before his gaze Mollie's eyes wavered and fell. A hot flush covered her face, spreading swiftly till the crimson tide suffused both throat and forehead. Then suddenly the flame receded, and her eyes flashed steely. "No!" she cried. "I don't believe you. You have taken Captain Fairfax unfairly—by treachery. Release him and I will believe you—not otherwise. You said you were in my debt—prove it!"

But Archie broke in. "Oh, I say, Mollie, that isn't fair," he cried. "Winslow's all right. I knew him at West Point. He isn't a sneak. It was my own fool fault—"

Winslow raised his hand. "Miss Cassidy is right," he said. "I am in her debt. I promised to pay and I will pay—if I can. Fairfax,"—he turned to the other,— "on your word of honor: What were you doing in our lines last night?"

Archie stared at him. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "I haven't been in your lines for a week, fair sir," he answered, jauntily. "I was on my own way here in answer to Mollie's letter when your men jumped me. I wasn't scouting. I wasn't even on duty. I got three days' furlough—to see Mollie. I'm in your lines now by mistake."

"You carry no dispatches—no information? On your word of honor?" The boy's tones were hoarse.

"None. But what difference does that make? You people have got plenty of old scores against me. You've got me, all right. Let's get it over with. I surrender. Send your men away. I'll go with you where you will. I give you my parole."

Winslow's face was chalky. "Yes," he

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He bent down and kissed her upturned lips.

echoed dully. "Let's get it over with." He stepped to the door and threw it open. The yellow lamplight streamed out, like a great golden cinematograph; in it armed men flashed out, vivid against the darkness. His voice rang out and the troopers on the lawn drew together; then they tramped away.

Winslow came back. "Be at ease, ladies," he said, coldly. "I pledge you my word Captain Fairfax is in no immediate danger. I will see that you are notified if his peril should increase." Turning, he strode out of the door. "Come, Captain!" he ordered, and Archie followed him into the night.

## II

The two men had been gone for an hour—an hour in which Mollie had mercifully been spared the necessity for thinking. Mrs. Cassidy had fainted and her daughter's every energy had been

strained in caring for her. When at last she had been got into bed and was resting as quietly as might be, there came a rap at the door.

Mollie opened it and confronted a cavalry lieutenant, who saluted. "Miss Cassidy?" he asked.

"Yes."

"General Northrop desires your immediate presence at headquarters, madam."

"I'll come." Mollie caught up her shawl. "Just a moment." She ran to the lounge where Mrs. Cassidy lay. "General Northrop has sent for me, Mother," she said, hurriedly. "I must go. I'll stop by Mrs. Mayhew's and get her to come in and stay with you. Don't be frightened, dear. I'm sure everything is going to be all right." The girl spoke with an assurance she was far from feeling.

Headquarters was only a few hundred yards away. Mollie picked it out at once



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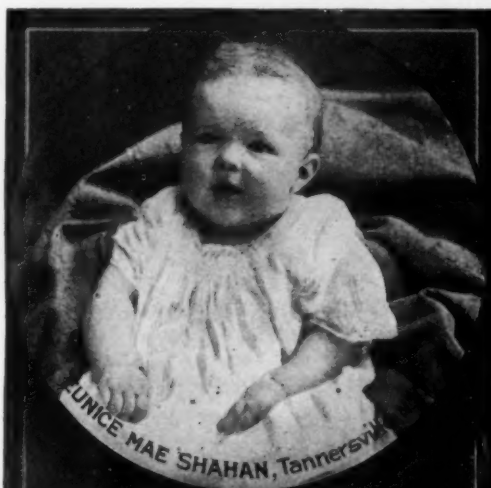
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by the lanterns that hung outside it. Their glow cast a wavering glimmer on the under surface of the leaves that canopied the streets. Elsewhere the houses were dark. The village slept.

The breeze had died away and the night had grown suddenly hot. Doors and windows of headquarters stood open to catch what air was stirring. A coatless sentry, standing in the outer hall, rifle in hand, now and then slapped at mosquitoes or at some beetle that blundered against his face. At the sight of the girl he straightened up.

The lieutenant indicated the room on the left and Mollie walked in. Simultaneously, an officer in a faded blue uniform with a star on his collar stopped his restless march up and down, and turned to face her.

"You are Miss Cassidy?" he questioned shortly.

Mollie bowed. Swiftly she glanced around the room, seeking either Archie or Captain Winslow. They were not present, and her gaze came back to the general.

He was frowning heavily. "I am sorry to disturb you, Miss Cassidy," he said, irritably; "but it was necessary. I understand that a Confederate officer, one Captain Fairfax, was arrested by Captain Winslow at your home to-night."

The general's manner seemed peculiar. Instantly Mollie was on her guard. "Was he?" She asked the question with a calmness that amazed herself.

"Wasn't he? I'm asking *you*?" The general's heavy brows drew down into one straight line across his forehead.

Mollie held her head high. A spot of color burned in her cheek. Outwardly she was composed, but inwardly she quaked. She did not know why, but she felt suddenly that much depended on her answer. "Surely Captain Winslow has reported what happened," she evaded.

"Reported? Humph!" The general suppressed an exclamation. "Look here, Miss Cassidy," he demanded: "I want to know exactly what happened at your house to-night. You needn't be afraid of betraying your friends. I knew Captain Fairfax at West Point before the war. He's a devilish fine fellow—and a devilish dangerous spy. I've been trying to

catch him for months. I know he was here to-night. I know he was at your house. Captain Winslow went to arrest him—he did arrest him. Then he sent the guard away, saying he was about to start here with his prisoner—an idiotic thing to do—"

"Archie gave his parole. You don't mean—"

"His parole? He gave his parole? Are you sure?" The questions came with bullet-like directness.

Mollie shivered. Instinctively she knew that she had said too much. But there seemed nothing to do but to go on.

"He asked Captain Winslow to send away his men and promised to go with him."

"Oh! he did? Miss Cassidy, Captain Fairfax did not keep his word. My men report that as he passed the end of the bridge he seized Captain Winslow's horse, sprang upon it, and rushed across the bridge. The sentries fired but apparently missed, and so far as we know Captain Fairfax reached the Confederate lines safely. He had broken his parole and saved himself."

"It's not true!" White-faced, desperate, Mollie faced him. "It's a lie!" she shrilled. "Archie Fairfax would not break his word to save his life."

Slowly General Northrop nodded. "Yes! I think it must be a lie," he said thoughtfully. "You will forgive me, Miss Cassidy. I had to make sure. The sentries at the bridge reported as I have said. But before then Captain Winslow—one of my very best officers, madam, though only a boy—a chivalric boy—Captain Winslow had come in here and reported himself guilty of disobedience of orders, treason—God knows what—"

"Treason!"

"Treason, madam; I said treason! Captain Winslow reported he had released his prisoner—had deliberately given him a chance to dash through the lines and had seen him safely out of reach."

"He let him go?" Incredulously Mollie leaned forward, with parted lips and soft, gasping breath. "He let him go? He let Archie go?"

"Yes! He let him go. And I've sent for you to tell me why the devil he

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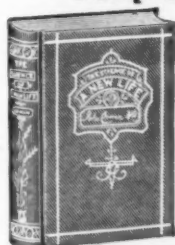
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did it. Do you know?"

Mollie faced him, white as death. "Yes. I suppose I know. I *do* know. So that was what he meant! And he confessed. Of course, he *had* to confess. He couldn't do anything else. But I never *guessed*—*General!* You'll forgive him. You won't—" Her words died away.

"Madam, there is but one punishment for Captain Winslow's offense. He knew there was but one. He asks for that punishment. He will be court-martialed and shot at dawn to-morrow."

"Shot! Oh, no! Not that! Not that! He—oh, he's done nothing to merit that! It was all my fault. I thought he had taken Archie unfairly. I thought he had spied on me—had tricked me. I refused to believe his explanation. I said—*cruel* things. I said he had—kissed me—by a trick. I didn't mean it. I knew it wasn't true when I said it. I was mad—mad with grief and terror. And he said he was in my debt—and would pay. And—oh, General! you can't mean to take his life?"

"The court-martial will undoubtedly sentence him to death, and I must coincide. There is nothing else to be done. I sent for you to see if you could tell me anything that would warrant me in mitigating his sentence. You have been able to tell me nothing. Captain Fairfax is a very daring spy. The information he has been able to collect in the past undoubt-



Mollie opened the door and confronted a cavalry lieutenant

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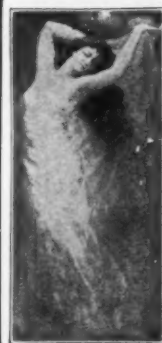
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"Not yet, General, give me a moment. Let me think." Distractedly Mollie clasped her hands. "There's something wrong. Don't you see there's something wrong? Why should Captain Winslow let Archie rush through the lines—why did he let him risk being shot—if he was going to confess the truth right away? Why did he do it? It wasn't to deceive you. It was—it was—General; I see! It was to deceive Archie!"

"To deceive Archie?" The general's tones were incredulous.

"Yes. Don't you understand. Archie knew—he must have known what it would mean to Captain Winslow to release him. He would have known that Captain Winslow did it because of me, and he would never have accepted his life at such a price. Don't I know? And he wouldn't have broken his parole. Not he. Captain Winslow made Archie think that he would deceive you and would go unpunished."

General Northrop grunted. "That's all very well—very well! But it's all conjecture—all conjecture. Not that I think it isn't true. Probably it is. It's just the thing a fool boy like Winslow would do. But it makes no difference whether it's true or not. This is war, madam, and that sort of gallantry is a crime in war-time. It's got to be punished. Once more I wish you good-night."

"No!" Mollie stood up very straight. High color pulsed in her cheeks, but her eyes were steady. "Not yet. I have something more to say. Captain Fairfax is not the man to let another die for him. He will pay his own debts to the last penny. I demand that you send to the Confederate lines and notify Captain Fairfax that Captain Winslow's life is in pawn for his. Do this and Captain Fairfax will return to offer his own in redemption."

General Northrop stared at the girl from beneath his bushy brows.

"Captain Fairfax cannot redeem Captain Winslow's life," he said, at last. "His return—if he does return—"

"He will return!"

"Perhaps. But that will not make Captain Winslow's crime any the less. His life will still be forfeit. And Captain Fairfax's will be forfeit, too."

"Archie's life!" A spasm of pain crossed Mollie's face, but her voice was high. "More than life is at stake here, General Northrop."

The general bowed. "I will send," he assented. "Perhaps Captain Fairfax will come, after all—if his superiors will permit. He, too, is a boy—of the chivalric age. Now, Miss Cassidy, I want you to go home and rest. The rebel lines are only half a mile away, but it is not altogether easy to communicate with them by night. It will take some time. I will send for you the moment there is need."

Three hours later Mollie again stood in the room at headquarters.

The weary-eyed general rose as she entered. "Captain Fairfax will be here in a moment, Miss Cassidy," he said, slowly. "He came the instant he understood. He surrendered unconditionally. I do not know how he arranged matters with his own commander. You may speak to him—in my presence."

"Thank you, General."

The tramp of feet sounded on the walk; then came a sharp command, followed by the thud of rifle butts on the boards of the porch. An instant later an officer entered; he flung his hand to his cap in salute; then stood at attention.

"The prisoner is outside, sir," he reported.

"Very good. Bring him in."

A moment later Archie was in the room. He had not been disarmed; his sword-swung at his belt; his pistol hung in its holster.

He did not see Mollie. His eyes were fixed on the general, who turned gravely to meet him. Automatically he saluted.

"General Northrop?" he questioned.

"Yes. You are Captain Fairfax?"

"I am, sir. A message signaled from your lines reached me a few moments ago. It said that Captain Winslow had volun-

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tarily reported himself guilty of treason for letting me escape and that he was to be court-martialed and shot at dawn unless I surrendered. Is this true?"

"It is quite true, Captain Fairfax. Captain Winslow reported the facts instantly and voluntarily, and asked that he be punished. Miss Cassidy insisted that I should send you word." He gestured toward Mollie. "She declared you could not have understood—"

Archie glanced at Mollie and nodded. "Thank you, old girl," he said. Then he turned to the general. "Of course, I didn't understand," he said. "I ought to have understood. Winslow is a gentleman, and of course he couldn't do anything but confess. I was amazed when he gave me back my parole and told me to run for it. I refused at first. I guessed he was doing it because of what Mollie had said to him and I refused to let him get into trouble for me. But he said he would report that I had knocked him down and all that, and that he would get off with a reprimand. I ought to have guessed that he was saying that to get me to go. But there wasn't much time to think. So I jumped on his horse and ran for it— And he came straight to you, of course?"

"Straight."

"Well, I'm here. Your message didn't promise anything, sir, but it suggested that if I surrendered, he would be pardoned. So I'm here. He's only a boy, General."

"And you?" The general's tones were dry.

"Me? Oh! I'm years older than Winslow. He was a plebe at the Point when I was a second classman. Winslow's nearer Mollie's age—and he's very much in love. He's had his lesson, General, and I think you'll find him a far better officer in consequence. I think—well, after all, General, you really do owe me something—"

The general turned away.

"Orderly," he called, "have Captain Winslow brought here at once."

Archie moved over to Mollie and spoke to her in a low tone. The General watched them in silence. Then he spoke abruptly. "How did you get permission to surrender, Captain Fairfax?" he asked.

Archie's face showed puzzlement.

"Why! I just reported the facts," he answered, "and of course—"

"Exactly! The facts were of course sufficient. Is this war, or is it a damned pink tea, Captain Fairfax? Did you carry any papers or give any information to your forces during your liberty-to-night?"

Archie shook his head. "I hadn't any to give, General," he said. "I got into your lines by accident. I came here on personal business. I was not scouting."

"On your word of honor?"

"On my word of honor!"

"Very well. Perhaps we need not inquire too closely into your earlier adventures, provided—"

"Yes, General!"

"Provided— But here comes Captain Winslow."

Winslow entered, under guard. His look was set and his face showed no vestige of color, but he moved steadily until he saw Mollie and Captain Fairfax. Then he caught at a chair.

General Northrop gestured to the guards and they left the room. Then he faced his subaltern.

"Captain Winslow," he said gruffly, "you have committed a gross military crime whose consequences might have been very serious—a crime for which the penalty is death. However, in view of the fact that Captain Fairfax has voluntarily surrendered I am disposed to condone your offense under certain conditions."

The general turned to Mollie. "Young lady," he said, severely, "it all comes back to you. You brought Captain Fairfax into my lines. You induced Captain Winslow to fail in his duty. Moreover, I have heard of you from other sources. You are dangerous, infernally dangerous. I am not going to leave you here to imperil my men. Or, rather, I am going to see that your claws are cut first."

The old man glared, but there was a twinkle behind the glare.

"I know you Southern girls," he went on. "You make the damndest firebrands while you're single and the truest wives when you're married. Therefore I'm going to marry you!"

"Me! You! Marry me!" Mollie's mouth gaped wide. Both Fairfax and Winslow leaned forward suddenly.

"Marry you to somebody else—at

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once," went on the general, imperturbably. "You can choose either Fairfax or Winslow. Whichever you take, the situation will be saved. If you marry Captain Fairfax, Captain Winslow can safely go back to his duty. And if you marry Captain Winslow, Captain Fairfax will take no more desperate chances to see you. I can't release Captain Fairfax—he is my prisoner, by rights. But I can send him north under parole as a prisoner of war. So make your choice and everything will

is my half-sister. Our names are different and I reckon that's why you and Winslow didn't know."

Winslow drew his breath sharply. The general did not exclaim, but the disgusted expression on his face was eloquent. After a moment: "Oh, very well," he said, somewhat stiffly. "I withdraw my offer."

Mollie stopped laughing. A startled expression came into her soft eyes and a rosy fire suffused her face. "That isn't



"Wont you have me, Frank?" she asked bravely

be reasonably right. Refuse, and—" He paused significantly.

Mollie looked at Archie and Archie looked at Mollie. Suddenly both of them began to laugh. They kept on until the puzzled general grew angry.

"When you get through, perhaps you will explain, Captain Fairfax," he broke in, gruffly.

Archie wiped the tears from his eyes. "I beg your pardon, General," he said. "I beg your pardon. I guess we're both hysterical. We've been under a pretty severe strain and— The fact is, sir, that Mollie

fair, General," she protested, faintly. "You promised me my choice."

The general snorted. "Yes, of course, but— God bless my soul!"

Mollie had turned from him and was stretching out her hand to Winslow. She was scarlet to the tips of her ears.

"Wont you have me, Frank?" she asked, bravely.

Then, as Winslow caught her in his arms the general turned upon the goggle-eyed sentry in the hall. "Orderly," he yelled, "rout out the chaplain and tell him to come here double quick."

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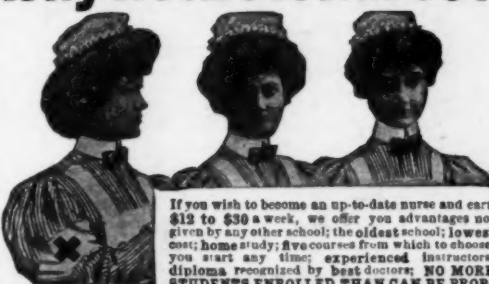
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I made a wry face and crumpled the sheet of paper in a clenched fist.

"How dare you!" cried Pauline, flushed with the charming anger of a pretty girl. I restored the document, and she flattened it out, turning her back upon me.

When I saw her delicate shoulders heave, contrition smote me. After all, no girl cares for a marriage proposal to be treated like a butcher's circular. There was real regret in my apology:

"Forgive me, Pauline. You see—you know—I cannot bear to think of you marrying Lomax."

"And why not?" she flashed.

"You can put the question?" I glanced to make sure that the door was closed. "Then you compel the obvious reply. We three—Armande Duverne, myself, yourself—walk on a volcano's crust. True, we are light-footed. On the other hand, the crust is not particularly thick, and the fire underneath is fathomless and hot as—as—"

"I don't want your simile," Pauline pouted.

"It isn't pretty; but it is terribly true. In short, are not we three, in our opinion, the greatest diamond thieves extant? And although it seems a pity that our genius in this respect is knowledge that must be limited to ourselves, yet the outside world, though it might admire, would certainly hide our light under a big stone bushel with iron gates, and an exercise yard, and—"

Pauline faced me, angrier than ever. "You are trying to frighten me, Derek. What nonsense! We have long since passed that stage. Besides, suppose that my principal reason for accepting Mr. Lomax is that I wish to break away from the dangerous existence we are leading? What then?"

"An existence which is breath to you? Bah, without its fascination, the glamour of the fiercest excitement that any man or woman can know, what would become of us? Perhaps you intend to divert your energy into the channel of a presidency of a sewing-class?"

"You are bitter, Derek. And I deny your right to dictate to me." Pauline took a seat, drew towards her a silver vase that held two yellow roses, and bent her face over the petals.

I played another card:

"Two years ago," said I slowly, "William Ferrol Lomax figured in a sensational case. George Bernafs was a young

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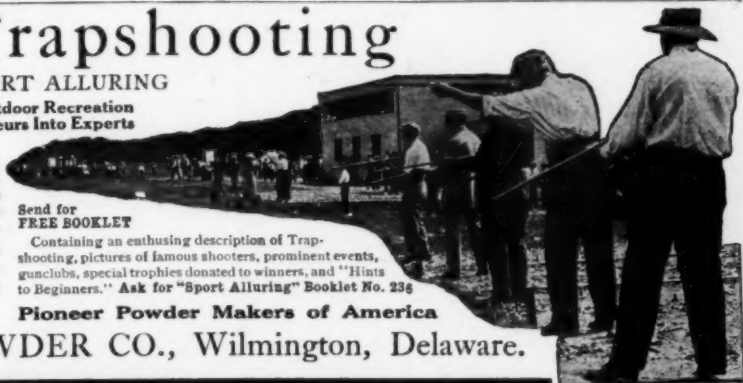
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fellow of about my age. I knew him—a promising chap with ambitions for the diplomatic service. Abruptly, terribly, these hopes were blasted, shriveled. He fell through that very crust to which I have alluded. Plainly, he was charged with the theft of some highly valuable jewels. Lomax was his friend; and it must have been a cruel torture to Lomax to have to give evidence against him. But that was what happened. Bernars got two years. Poor devil! His time must be up. But he is done for, and will certainly go down into the maelstrom."

Pauline yawned. "What has this to do with my offer of marriage? You tell me very stale news."

I reached for a cigarette. "Well, if you can marry a man who has seen a good friend sentenced for diamond stealing, then—you are certainly not without nerve!"

"You have only just made the discovery?" Pauline lifted beautiful brows and regarded me with mock gravity. "Your reason is childish, dear boy. You are trying to make William—oh, I shall use his Christian name if I want to—you are trying to make him out a sort of lion that snaps up jewel thieves, into whose jaws I am going to put my head. How silly! Unless you are darkly inferring that some of the mud flung up by the case to which you referred stuck to him? If so—"

"Oh, Lomax is straight enough," I interjected gloomily. "He suffered terribly, and I pitied him. Well, let us leave that matter out of the present talk, Pauline. Come, you do not mean to marry him?"

"Why not?" answered Pauline.

I pushed my chair back hastily. I believe it went flying. Why not, indeed? I will tell you what Pauline herself more than suspected: that her dainty presence had for me a power of gravitation from which I could not escape.

I revolved round this star; but then I was still able to keep from falling into it.

Pauline rose also and looked at me with demure eyes, all sparkle of anger gone. I trembled. It was one of those moments, those ecstatic, pain-fraught moments when I ached through every nerve to fling arms round her fragile, her delicate prettiness.

Instead, I picked up the chair.

"Now go," said Pauline. "I do not like you when you are rough. And please do me the small favor of mailing this letter. It is to Mr. Lomax, in answer to his. It contains my acceptance of his offer."

I gasped. The letter was in my hand and I was staring at it foolishly.

"Good evening," purred Pauline.

I answered huskily: "So you break with the old life?"

"I am going to become an honest girl."

"You will rue it."

Pauline laughed.

"Without you, Armande Duverne and myself will speedily ride to a fall."

"Then follow my example, Derek."

I tugged the door ajar viciously, and turned for a parting shot. "Lomax is rich enough. He will give you all the diamonds you ask for, yes. But believe me, you'll find him tame, and your life tamer, and you'll long for the old enchantment. But it will be too late!"

"Do not forget to mail my letter," smiled Pauline.

I banged out in a nice little temper.

At once I found myself in Jermyn Street, where Pauline rented a flat. I dined at one of the quiet, quite good restaurants in Jermyn Street, and which are to be preferred to the flashy, noisy *salles à manger* nearer Piccadilly. I ate and I pondered. I wanted to tell Duverne of Pauline's decision, but Armande was in his beloved Paris, from which he moved only when a great diamond *coup* was being arranged by us.

Suddenly I thought of young George Bernars again. Was he out, I wondered? If so, where? I felt that I should like to see him.

He had rather compelled my admiration in regard to the theft which had crushed him, because he had contrived to conceal two-thirds of the spoil. If you ever appropriate jewels that do not belong to you (which fate forbid!) you will realize the extreme difficulty of hiding the quarry in such a manner that it cannot be found in the event of your luckless arrest.

Bernars had helped himself to the well-known collection of colored diamonds which belonged to the Countess

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de Ravenne. In a nut-shell, here it is: George Bernars, at the time of the disaster, was a bridge fool who owed a small fortune through losses at play. His circumstances were desperate. One evening he called at the house of the Countess de Ravenne in Pall Mall. He knew the Countess socially. She was the English wife of a French nobleman, and the favorite sister of a cabinet minister. She was not at home, and Bernars, who showed signs of great agitation, asked permission to wait. When the lady returned ten minutes later Bernars had gone—mysteriously. So had the collection of colored diamonds which she kept in a rosewood casket in a secret drawer of a small writing-desk in her dressing-room. Bernars had been flurried in action. Violently jerking the locked drawers, he had spilled some of the ink in a silver inkstand on the desk. His fingers had touched the fluid, and he had left an imprint of them in two places. In this he had acted as a fool.

The police went to his house, and there they found twenty of the missing jewels. The rest Bernars had disposed of in some way. In that he acted as a genius.

Lomax's evidence a child could have translated. When Bernars rushed from the Countess' house to his own flat he found Lomax waiting for him. Bernars was so dreadfully agitated that he could only speak after swallowing a stiff dose of brandy straight.

Lomax had come away, sorely puzzled. He was a good-hearted fellow, rich, and devoted to a nice wife who died soon after the affair. He had been compelled to give evidence, as he was one of the few who had seen and spoken with George Bernars after the robbery.

There you have it.

As for the diamonds, I had seen them many a time. They were all unset; some were splendid, especially the deep-yellows, which I had always coveted.

I went out with the idea of discovering Bernars, an idea created, I suppose, by this remembrance of him, by the fact that he had been the friend of Lomax, who wanted Pauline, and also, I doubt not, by an unburied curiosity as to how he really did get rid of those stones.

At one of his old clubs I unearthed a

man to whom he had shown himself since coming out of prison, a month ago. Having asked for the loan of a small sum, he had retired with it into obscurity. A week later he wrote from that obscurity and begged for another like amount. The address was given to me. A taxi rolled me thither, into a savorless street within sound of the roar that comes off London Bridge. The street door of the lodging-house opened upon a stone staircase. Bernars' room was at the top. On the final flight, which was narrow and unlighted, some one coming up behind me called, "Is your name Bernars?"

"Here, I believe. I'm going in," I replied, and I took from the outstretched hand of a mail-carrier an envelope.

There were two doors at the top of the tenement. One was ajar an inch or two, and a faint glow of firelight glimmered upon the squalid landing. A dog was growling deep down in its throat. Then I heard a voice say—a dull, dead, hopeless voice:

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The dog whimpered.

"But then, Pip, I wonder how you'd look at me if you knew what the others do? Listen, old fellow. Do you know where your master's been this weary while? I'll tell you. In hell. And now he's come out, and his one-time friends must still see the reflection of the infernal fire in his face and the devil's brand over his forehead, because they look the other way, old friend. But you don't—you don't. My God!"

The man sobbed outright.

The dog whined unhappily.

"Mind, I don't blame them," went on

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the speaker, recovering himself. "It was my own fault, Pip. I did what I should not have done. Perhaps I should have acted as these one-time friends act if the situation was reversed. Who knows? Bah, I'm not going to let their cutting of me gall me. Not a bit. There's only one, old pal, whose word of forgiveness, whose kiss of loving forgiveness, I'd give the rest of my life to have. But she died while I was in hell, and my good mother has

left all power of comfort to you. And what do you think, Pip? She believed that I was as innocent as—as herself. Ah, what our mothers will believe! What prayers they will pray; what hopes they will hope; what faults they will extenuate—and what tears they will weep! Some one wrote of them—

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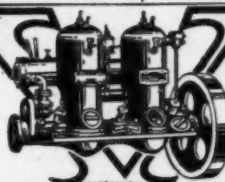


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To memories of my mother, to the  
divine blending, maternity,  
To her, buried and gone, yet buried  
not, gone not from me....

He stopped with great abruptness. Still the dog whimpered pityingly. I pressed the door a little more ajar. A wretchedly-furnished room was bathed in a nebulous haze from a coke fire at the end opposite the door. A man was sitting by one side of the fire, and a dog at the other. Their shadows, enormous, formless, loomed in a sinister fashion upon the wall.

"Ah—h'm," I coughed.

Like a flash the bull-terrier came for me. Its owner yelled and almost flung himself upon it.

"A nice little toy for a top-back room, Bernars," I said grimly.

He ordered the brute into a corner, where it edged reluctantly, watching me sideways, red eyes aglare with hostility.

"You remember Derek Tredgold," I went on, holding out my hand.

He looked at it and at me, but held off, shaking his head. "Can't say I do," he answered, ungraciously enough.

"We were in the same set." I mentioned one or two names of mutual acquaintances.

"Oh, if you say you knew me, I'll believe you," he replied impatiently. "You must be proud of the acquaintance to want to keep it going. Take a seat. What can I offer you? Cigars and champagne?"

I let the mockery slide and dropped into the one chair. Bernars sat on the side of the bed. I began:

"I only heard to-day that you—were—"

"At large," he interrupted. "Say it. I'm out on a ticket-of-leave. What have you come for? My experiences?"

"Will you smoke a cigar?"

"No."

I rose with a sigh. Obviously he did not mean to let me discuss the affair. The room was filled with stale air, and its horrible poverty jarred. I said as I moved to the door:

"If a five-pound note can be of service—"

"Keep it."

Decidedly he took to me no more than his dog, which still growled menacingly.

I was in the act of going out when I remembered the package which had been handed to me, which I had thrust into a side pocket.

"Here is a letter for you," I said, producing it.

He turned it over and saw some inscription upon the unaddressed side. In spite of the semi-gloom he must have read it, for he cried out.

"My soul! can't they let me alone—here?" he groaned. Then he took a candle in a china holder from the mantelpiece, and lighted it, putting it on the table. I saw his fingers shaking as he tore open the large envelope. There was another and smaller one inside, which he regarded with a long, puzzled stare. Finally he wrenched out the contents of this second envelope. His stare became more perplexed as he unfolded a sheet of ordinary note paper. He turned it this and that way.

"What the devil does it all mean?" he exclaimed impatiently.

I ventured a mild, "Nothing unwellcome?"

He started, evidently thinking I had gone. Then his right hand went up to his forehead and he staggered.

"It makes my head swim," he muttered.

I stepped forward with a sympathetic "Allow me." The outer envelope bore the words, "His Majesty's Prison Chainlock." This explained his emotion. Being discharged on a ticket-of-leave, he had to supply his address to the authorities. The inner envelope, covered with a brown stain, bore the inscription, "To George Bernars, Chainlock Prison, England." This inscription was well-nigh indecipherable, yet clear enough for the prison officials to have read it and so forward the package. Only the fact that it had been written in large characters had saved it. Not so the enclosed letter itself, the smaller wording of which was blurred and stained and rendered illegible.

"It has had a good soaking," I said.

"May I have a shot at it?"

"Oh, do what you like," he said.

With the help of a pocket lense I got to work.

The first word of any clearness at all

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bore resemblance to "owner." Then, after one or two minor words, at intervals, in the general illegibility, I came upon "Pauline." It caused me but a mild surprise, but when, almost following it I was certain that I could perceive the name March, I was conscious of something more than faint astonishment!

With re-doubled attention I continued my attempts to draw rhyme or reason from this mysterious document; but so much was beyond me. Some words I dragged from obscurity—"before.... minutes....influence....almost promised...." and then a good fragment—"at the last moment...." followed at intervals by scattered expressions—"my automobile...you arrived...signs of...dog-headed ape...I pray..." So far I waded, and then brought up with a second jerk of surprise, for the signature to this queer document consisted of three words, of which the last was blurred out of perception; but the fore-running were, "William Ferrol..."

This was a glimmer of light. Obviously here was a note from Lomax to Bernars, written while the latter was in prison. But heaven knew what it all meant. I didn't care greatly; but those words "Pauline March" pricked my curiosity deeply.

Bernars looked up with a growled, "Well?"

I read aloud the words I had deciphered. After Pauline's name I stopped to observe any effect, but he received it with apathy. On my asking if he had known her he shook his head. I continued, and as I read out the name William Ferrol Lomax, Bernars jumped up and snatched the paper.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "There's no Lomax here that I can see."

To cover my slip I asked if he had heard from Lomax.

"He sent me money, which I sent back. All I wanted was my dog, which he took care of. I have him now. Drop the subject. The candle's going out. If you don't want to stay in the dark you'll go."

I did not want to stay in the dark, so I went. However, while he was jerking into the fire the dead, smoking candlewick, I slipped a five-pound note onto the table.

Charity? By no means. I took away, in exchange, this mysterious letter. Obviously it did not interest him. Me, it interested profoundly.

That night I consumed three hours and ten cigars trying to draw sense from the document. Some other words I managed, but failed to discover coherently between the scattered links.

Suddenly I remembered that Armande Duverne possessed a happy knack of solving conundrums in words. I recalled the affair of the famous Draga red sapphires, once stolen, and which Duverne had found for the owner by his extraordinary reading of a cipher message in a Cologne newspaper. I scribbled a note telling him just what I have put down here, and enclosed the letter.

I put the matter out of mind until the following evening. It was brought back to me by a brief paragraph in a late edition. This paragraph "understood that a marriage had been arranged between Mr. William Ferrol Lomax, second son of the late Sir Theodore Lomax, Bart., and Miss Pauline March, a charming American girl."

So Pauline was in earnest! I read the news at my club; and while I still stared at the words in a gloomy fashion, and wondered how long it would be before she would regret the step, a waiter's disciplined voice murmured, "A telegram for you, sir."

It was from Duverne. The message was queer, being simply:

Inquire immediately if W. F. L. had yacht named *Pauline*. Waiting for your wire.

ARMANDE.

It gave me a flutter of excitement. Duverne had seen daylight, apparently, and was going to act at once in some way. His telegram suggested urgency. I went straight out to find Lomax, to obtain the necessary information from the fountain-head. He belonged to three clubs. First I would try the Automobile.

On the way I began to think that Duverne was at fault. If he had read the name of a yacht into that word "Pauline," he was wrong; because the name was "Pauline March," as I have stated. Now Lomax had known his *fiancée* little more



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than a month. He had certainly bought no yacht in that period, for I was aware that he always refused to trust himself on the water, having a horror of it.

I had trouble in finding him. Then I turned my steps towards Jermyn Street in the hope that Pauline might tell me where to look. On the way I met both of them, absorbed in study of an oil painting in a shop window. I had to risk being *de trop*.

I was. Lomax fidgeted under my company, and Pauline, between us as we walked, frowned perceptibly, and delightfully. So I was compelled to force the subject in mind, and came out with a somewhat abrupt:

"By the way, Lomax, was there a time when you were fonder of the water than you are now?"

He flashed a glance across at me, a glance of absolute consternation, but did not reply.

"Yachting never appealed to you?"

His face whitened. Pauline looked from one to the other of us wondering. He said at last, in a strained tone: "What makes you ask that question?"

"Merely passing curiosity. Yachting in one's own boat is a luxury open to some lucky people. You should take it up. Buy a nice little sailer if you don't care for steam. And call it, say, *Pauline*."

That was as near to the direct question as I could manage; but beyond a shadow of doubt it was near enough. For the effect of the simple suggestion upon Lomax was to drive every drop of red from his cheeks. He stopped dead, almost reeled, and fixed upon me a look of deadly fear, or horror, or something much akin to it.

I believe that I uttered some broken apology for touching on a matter against which he was prejudiced; and I speedily dropped off.

Three minutes later I was scribbling a wire at a telegraph office:

Have good reason for thinking that W. F. L. had, or knows something about a boat called *Pauline*.

After dashing off this answer to Armande Duverne I turned round to deliver it to an official, and there was Lomax, right behind me!

A feeble smile passed over his pale face; he muttered something about "coincidence," and turned away. But assuredly it was no coincidence which had sent him instantly after me to the same destination. The question was, "Had he succeeded in reading my message over my shoulder?"

I did not think it possible, for he was near-sighted, wearing a *pince-nez*. But I was annoyed with myself. I felt that I was making an enemy.

Duverne appeared next day. I waited indoors for him in obedience to another wire asking me to do so. His thin, æsthetic face wore its customary languid expression as he complained:

"This is a great nuisance, *mon ami*. I had to break an appointment with my publisher to-day to come here, and my new sonnets, '*Fantaisies d'Avril*,' may suffer accordingly. But, *diable!*—such an opportunity as you have hit on does not occur every day. Now where is this Lomax man? In London, I hope?"

"You want to see him?"

"Heaven forbid! Our little Pauline may know, since she has been so foolish as to become engaged to him. Permit me to use your 'phone."

He made the connection all right, but showed petulance as he hung up the receiver.

"Ah, bah," said he, "our *petite* Pauline is cross. The sound of my voice distressed her. She fears that we have a conspiracy against her *fiancé's* jewels—the beautiful stones that belonged to his first wife. She is wrong, however. Still, she is suspicious, and what we do we do quickly. Lomax is in town. Put on your thickest overcoat. We are going down to Marshlands Hall, in Buckinghamshire."

"Lomax's place, that is?"

"Precisely."

"What are you going to do there?"

"See a curiosity in zoölogy—a dog-headed ape."

"You intend to leave me in the dark?"

"Pray ask no questions—yet."

We lost no time—caught a train after only a twenty minutes' wait at the terminus, and were whirled through the country, over which twilight was creeping. Duverne sat in a corner of the compartment, the paper which I had sent to

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him spread out on a magazine on his knees. He appeared to be studying it with the utmost concentration. Suddenly he uttered a shout of delight.

"I have it! Splendid!" he exclaimed.

"What? the message there is perfectly clear to you?"

"The—the message? What message? Ah, bah—no! It is the title of the fifth sonnet in the '*Fantaisies*,' which has bothered me for a whole day. Now I feel a good deal better. Now I am ready even to meet this Lomax, and that is saying a good deal."

"You will not find him very terrible."

"There you make a mistake, *mon cher*. I would sooner encounter a tiger to-night than William Ferrol Lomax. *Bigre!* I made a false move when I let our Pauline know I was interested in his movements."

"We have lost but little time, however. You really think that Lomax is to be feared?"

"My friend, he is in a most extraordinary situation. I have never even imagined its like. A parallel may have existed at some time or other, though I doubt it. And yet the position is a perfectly natural, a perfectly feasible one. Why did you send me this paper?"

"I was mystified by the name Pauline March."

He looked genuinely puzzled until I pointed out the words. Then he broke into a chuckle of merriment.

"*C'est drôle*; I see 'Pauline' sure enough, but it is the name of a yacht. Between it and 'March' is a blur; the blur stands for a date: suppose we say 'the fifth?'"

"What! And Pauline—"

"Our *petite* charmer has nothing to do with it—certainly not."

I felt so humiliated by my blunder that I spoke no other word until we reached the station to which we had booked. An inquiry told us that we had a walk of a couple of miles before us to Marshlands Hall. By that time the shadows had deepened into darkness. Turning our backs upon the few lights of the railway station we were almost instantly in total gloom. The road felt slimy with mud under our feet. We felt but could not see a mist, a chilling mist suspired by the slumbering water-meadows.

Duverne began to swear softly.

"*Diable!* I draw no inspiration from these things," he growled. "But I will not deny that poets have found the true fire in such a night-piece, such a nocturne. To me it has the smell, the cold and frightful smell of death, of tombs. Ah, bah, for this gloom give me the brave glitter of the opera; for this weeping of the earth, the song of a charming *grisette!*"

At that moment we heard the whine of an automobile approaching at great speed. We drew aside from the path of the brilliant head-lights, one of which flung a dazzling beam far before it, which blinded us. We were almost in a ditch as it shot by with a crash of speed. I fancied that I perceived two human figures in the car, but was not sure.

"Heaven be thanked for some signs of life," grunted Duverne, and he wiped, with a handkerchief, the flung-up mud spots from his face.

From the directions given us at the station we had no difficulty in finding the Hall. The big iron gates of a carriage entrance rose between two stone piers. The Lodge nestled up against one of these piers, smothered with ivy, and a cosy light streamed through its pretty leaded windows.

"Step as if on air," whispered my companion. He tried one of the gates and found it unpadlocked.

"Come," he murmured. "Mind, not a sound."

I followed with the greatest reluctance. There was never yet a first-class jewel thief who loved the burglar's silent art. I had always let it severely alone, and so, I knew, had Armande Duverne. I stopped.

"What is the matter?" he whispered angrily.

"There is something wrong, somewhere," I answered in the same tone. "I feel it in my bones. We are not safe here."

"Then go back."

I had half a mind to leave him, I confess. I had a sensation of walking into a trap. But I saw nothing save the gabled roof of the Hall dimly outlined against pale stars, and heard no sound except the husky whispering of the Lombardy poplars in the drive, which seemed to be

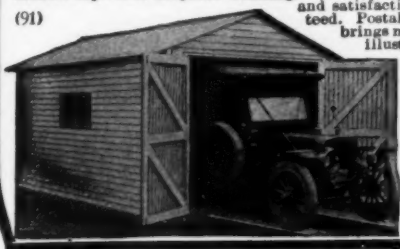
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cnfiding somber secrets to one another.

Cursing his love of secrecy, which kept me in the dark, I followed warily. The drive at length went winding round a sloping lawn. Stone steps glimmered ghostly up the bank of grass. They led to a pillared terrace, which we followed. Suddenly Duverne stopped. He bent forward and gave a murmur of surprise. Immediately I saw the cause of his emotion: a pane of glass had been somewhat clumsily cut from a French window. On the other side of the darkened aperture a pair of curtains moved uneasily in the draft.

"That is certainly a way in," said Duverne, looking at it with his head on one side. "An accident, doubtless; no cracksmen would smash a pane in that vulgar way. I am going in. Do you know anything about the inside of this place?"

"I do not," I answered curtly, "and I think you are taking a fool's chance."

"Ah, bah, I assure you there is nothing to fear. I must find the library. You see I brought candle and matches with me. I want you to stay here, Derek. If necessity arise I shall call for you."

He disappeared through the jagged orifice in the window. I heard him strike a match, and the feeble glimmer of his candle penetrated the flimsy curtains. Then it vanished.

The thought of burglar traps, of electric alarms, troubled my isolation sorely. What the devil was Duverne after? This crude fashion of breaking into a man's house was foreign to both of us. Pauline would never have associated herself with us in this sort of game.

At the far end of the carriage way I caught a glimpse of the lighted windows at the Lodge. Though the Hall was darkened, and we knew that Lomax was in town, yet that was no sure proof that the place was empty. Somehow I felt that Duverne was placing his head in the lion's jaws; and I was just asking myself if, when those jaws closed, I should cut and run, when the test came in the form of a splintering crash, followed instantly by a wild, appalling cry which sent the heart into my mouth.

No sound less sinister, less horrible, could have flashed into my brain those extraordinary words, "the dog-headed

ape." Heaven knows what grotesque, ape-like form rose into my startled imagination at that instant, conjured up by that savage yell in the deserted Hall, in the silent night. By a powerful effort of will I forced my unwilling legs to climb through the broken pane into the room. I heard another rending smash, a gurgling as of some one being strangled.

I found the door after barking both shins and tumbling over two obstacles. But I was utterly lost in the darkness. The sounds had ceased. I called out huskily: "Duverne?"

There was no reply. I peered this and that way, haunted by some fear of perceiving eyeballs glitter in the opaque gloom. I called the name again in a louder voice. Suddenly a door opened almost in front of me, and there was Duverne, holding up his lighted candle.

"*Diable*, what is the matter with you now?" he growled.

"Matter, indeed? What was that horrible cry?" I retorted hotly. "What madman's game are you up to?"

"Be quiet! Your imagination is serving you tricks. Come inside, if you must."

I obeyed. There was a nasty gash over his left eyebrow, and blood trickled down his face. He looked a changed man: he always was changed in moments of tense excitement.

He had found the library, for we were in it. He had lighted an oil lamp with a ruby-glass reservoir that stood on a revolving bookcase. A swift glance showed me the surrounding book-shelves, a writing-desk, the door of an adjoining room, and a table upset, with the fragments of an enormous rosebowl lying smashed by the fireplace.

Duverne said: "Have you a cigarette?" He panted rather, and spoke with a forced control of his nerves.

He inhaled two or three draws of Turkish tobacco. "So far, good," said he. "In fact, we have arrived. I came in search of the curiosity in zoology to which I alluded, and there, if my eyes do not err, it is!"

He pointed to the writing-desk, but all I could see was a pad of white blotting paper with a paper weight upon it.

"The dog-headed ape in question," he chuckled, taking up the paper-weight.

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The shock of surprise at his announcement was still on me when he gave a final twist to the relic. It came out in his fingers. He turned the hollow paper-weight upside down. I looked for a shower of the unset jewels, but no shower came.

The thing was empty!

Duverne's brow went black as thunder. He shook the weight violently, but his hand abruptly became paralyzed as a quiet voice said:

"Clever, but not clever enough—you pretty pair of scoundrels!"

Lomax was standing at the open door.

That was one of the ugly moments of my eventful life. Caught in a man's house by the man himself. And Lomax looked nasty, with a mottled complexion, and a business glitter in his eyes that boded mischief. He did not know Duverne, and he addressed himself to me.

"So, so," said he bitingly. "I have heard people express wonder at the style the Honorable Derek Tredgold keeps up without a known income. Housebreaking is one of your side lines, eh? Pray stay where you are, and if you are armed don't threaten me. I put my finger on this electric bell—so. One pressure alarms the people at the Lodge. An emergency bell, you understand. When they hear it they know what to do!"

"Ah, bah, if you ring it you will do a bad thing for yourself," said Duverne easily. "I have the honor, I presume, of speaking to Mr. William Ferrol Lomax. Permit me to crave a favor. I have come here for certain diamonds once the property of the Countess de Ravenne, and I

have not the remotest intention of departing without them."

Lomax regarded him with his glittering eyes. Heavens, how this meek and inoffensive man had changed! He answered hoarsely:

"Play your cards, then."

"Certainly," replied Duverne. From his pocket-book he extracted the document I had sent to him, and began to read:

To George Bernars, Chainlock Prison, England:—I, the owner of the steam yacht *Pauline*, write on this the fifth of March, 1911, a confession of my crime before death overtakes me. We are sinking within sight of Morocco. But five minutes is allowed me. You are innocent; I am guilty. I was at the Countess de Ravenne's house when you called. I was there to beg her to use her influence with her brother the minister to obtain for me the under-secretaryship almost promised to you. I was waiting in her boudoir when you rushed through. I saw you seek for her diamonds, but at the last moment you conquered yourself. You put them back and fled. A devilish impulse overcame me. I took the stones. My automobile was waiting and I rushed to your flat. I had but time to place twenty where they would be found when you arrived. You were unjustly sentenced. The missing diamonds, signs of your innocence, are in the hollow paper-weight bearing the figure of the dog-headed ape which I keep on my writing-desk in the library. I have suffered more than you. Forgive. I pray that this message—we are sinking.—William Ferrol Lomax.

Duverne looked up. I was watching Lomax, who was ashen white.

"An interesting document," said Armande blandly. "And an interesting situation. Presumably you consigned the message, somewhat insufficiently protected, to the sea. Presumably, also, the boat did not founder, or you were rescued in the nick of time. And you had already, in flinging your confession overboard, flung away also your eternal peace of mind. Dying, you could own up; living, you dared not. If you suffered before, you must since, with your secret likely to be picked up at any time, have endured torture unspeakable. And it *was* picked up. How, or by whom, I cannot inform

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you. But be easy. I give you my word that the facts are known to nobody save us three. What am I going to do with this? Restore it to you the moment you give me these missing jewels, *mon cher*."

Lomax wetted his dry lips. He answered, trying to steady his shaking voice:

"The fact that the stones are not there is a sign that the story has no foundation."

"Ah, bah! I hope the police will share your optimism."

"That paper is useless, and you know it. For argument's sake let me assume that I put down such a confession. Well, at such a time the words I wrote would have burned themselves into my brain. What I said I should have remembered. And I should know, if the message were spoiled, just how the blanks were filled up by a finder. You have filled them up, and cleverly, I own. But most are yours, my smart fellow; and far too many, I assure you, for me to have the slightest fear."

I saw Duverne bite his lips. He had over-reached himself. He answered: "And you will risk what opinion the police may form?"

"Rather than be blackmailed by you—yes."

"Wait. I have a second card. I have played my king, but the ace remains. Listen. When I came into this room I was nearly killed by an excited man who wanted to blow out my brains. He was hidden here. Luckily I am strong, though I confess I do not look it. This man had come to beg help of you. He found the house empty, and being a desperate sort of chap he broke a window and decided to help himself since you were not here to oblige him. He told me this because I had my fingers at his windpipe. I persuaded him to wait in that room. He told me his name. Just as ambition urged you to a vile impulse, so dire necessity prompted him to a crime. Suppose we bring him in—ah!"

The inner door was thrown open. George Bernars was standing on the threshold. He had heard all, and I never wish to see such an expression in any other human eyes as glared out of his. In his right hand he held a pistol, which he

had probably found in the library during his search.

Lomax recoiled to the wall.

"Keep him off! He'll murder me!" he almost screamed.

I stepped warily to Bernars' side.

"Yes," purred Duverne, "he certainly will—if we leave him with you. That is my ace. It beats you. Now—the diamonds!"

"I swear that I destroyed them!"

There was a silence. Duverne looked at me. It was more than likely that Lomax spoke truly. Armande made a wry face.

"So much the worse," said he. "You cannot restore the diamonds; I confess that this written paper has far too many blanks and blurs in it. Will you write another?"

"Never—never—never!" exclaimed Lomax with wild determination. "You can't prove anything against me—you who came here to steal. But I'll tell you what I will do. My check book is in one of those drawers. I'll give him a signed blank check."

Duverne regarded Bernars. "Agree," said he softly. "We cannot corner this gentleman. He offers you a fortune for your broken life. *Diable!* if I were in your shoes I would not say no."

Lomax was already writing the check. Duverne took it, scanned it and handed it to Bernars. "Be sensible," said he gently. "Make the figure a big one. Start a new life over-seas. Why not?"

Bernars opened his lips as if to speak, but no word came. In a mechanical fashion he took the slip of paper, and Duverne slipped the pistol from his hand. Then he turned to Lomax:

"On the day George Bernars cashes the check I'll send you your written confession—or the spoiled remnants of it. Hold your tongue henceforth, for you mustn't forget that the big sum you're giving your victim is a point always against you if you force me to talk of it. I think we can wish this pleasant gentleman *adieu*."

And Pauline?

Oh, Pauline invited Armande and myself to lunch with her on the following day. When in town she has a favorite

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restaurant in Jermyn Street, and the table she reserves, tucked away behind a crimson velvet *portière*, is ideal for a *tête-à-tête* dialogue.

Almost her first words were: "I have no admiration for your taste, my dear friends, in taking lonely nocturnal rambles in the country. Are there not such luxuries as automobiles?"

Duverne laughed. "Ah, bah, I might have guessed as much," said he. "You were in that car which went by like a winter gale and smothered me with mud? In other words, you warned your charming *fiancé*. Too bad."

Pauline pouted. "It was Derek's fault. He was jealous of him, and—and I didn't know just what you meant to do."

I cut in: "And Lomax recognized us?"

"To be sure. I hope I am not spoiling your lunch?"

"Not in the slightest."

Pauline sipped her sauterne and went on demurely:

"Yes, I told William that you had an interest in knowing just where he was. That seemed to make him nervous. He said he wanted to motor over to Marshlands, returning the same night. Would I care to accompany him? With delight. It was a glorious run. That William had something on his mind was palpable. He left me in the car, naturally, while he went into the Hall, which was in darkness. He came out much excited, drove the car a little further up the road, in complete shadow, and waited. Presently we heard footsteps—your footsteps. After waiting some minutes my companion went into the house again. He explained his conduct by saying that he feared an attempt was being made upon his property. Then I began to feel alarmed about you."

"You are more than kind," I murmured.

"Don't be satirical, Derek. Jealousy and sarcasm are quite spoiling you. As I said, I worried on your account. Also I am not a girl to sit still at a moment like that. So I stepped from the car and followed my poor William. I was well rewarded. Not for worlds would I have missed that brilliant duel of wits. You certainly excelled yourself, Armande; while your unexpected introduction of

George Bernars into the scene was a *dénouement* worthy of a Frenchman."

I interrupted: "Then you know—"

"Hush! Do not call my William bad names," pleaded Pauline. "Yes, I know about him."

"Then your engagement—"

"Will you be quiet!"

"Ah, bah, if you two would not quarrel so much!" sighed Duverne.

"I came away just in time," added Pauline softly. "I omitted to mention that when William returned from his first hurried entry into the house he slipped something into the locker under the leather of one of the seats. The curse of my sex led me to investigate. It was a little bag of limp chamois skin, and in it were forty unset colored diamonds."

Duverne's shoulders went up to his ears; his face was a study in mingled emotions.

"I wondered why he put them there," smiled Pauline demurely. "Afterwards it was clear to me: he feared that you might use violence and search him."

"And you have them with you?" exclaimed Duverne excitedly.

"Certainly not. William may suspect you, my friends, but I should not like him to think badly of me. Were we not engaged? Hasn't he—kissed me? I am not altogether without sentiment, really. On the other hand, if he found, say, six of the stones missing, he would very naturally assume that he lost them in his frenzy of hurry. —Draw that *portière* a little closer, Derek. Here are the six: a light brown—very rare; two with that blue tint that is so much sought after; this, which I suspect to be a red sapphire; and two of that deep golden hue that sell only in the most expensive markets. As for the other thirty-four, you may go after them one day, if you like, but I assure you that these are equal to their combined value."

"A thousand congratulations!" exclaimed Duverne.

"And you will not marry Lomax—now?" I insisted.

Pauline looked at me long and steadily from under lowered lashes.

"You ought to be sorry for me, Derek," she sighed. "It would have been such a desirable match!"



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# TROUBLED SEAS

ARTHUR BOLTONWOOD

**I**T was a simple request for ten cents' worth of peppermints. It was made mildly enough by a stout, middle-aged man with an air of the sea about him. He had just climbed stiffly from an automobile, which had stopped before the Menaumit post-office, and, since the noonday mail had just arrived and Captain Elisha Cobb, the postmaster, was busy assorting and distributing it, the request for the peppermints was made to the young woman, officially connected with the postoffice—and its adjacent candy and notion counter—as assistant.

There seemed nothing at all about that mild demand for peppermints at which anybody could have taken umbrage. But, to the utter astonishment of the little group waiting for the mail to be opened, Captain Elisha turned at the sound of the new-comer's voice, glared at him for a moment over the tops of his own steel-bowed spectacles, and then, dropping the handful of letters he had just picked up, he charged full tilt at the candy

ILLUSTRATED  
BY  
GRANT T.  
REYNARD

counter, emitting throaty bel-lows of wrath.

"Git outa here, Seth Bascom!" he roared. "Git outa here! You hear me? I wont have ye round, not even for

so much as a minute! You git!"

The newcomer involuntarily shrank back a step before those blazing eyes on the other side of the counter.

"Aw, say now, 'Lish," he began in conciliatory tones.

With an agility no one would ever have suspected him of possessing, Captain Cobb put one hand on the counter and cleared it with a single bound. Then, while the young woman assistant screamed shrilly, he leaped straight at the other man, caught the collar of his long linen duster in a mighty grip and began to push him violently towards the door.

So sudden had been the onslaught that the assaulted man was halfway across the little room before he recovered either his breath or his balance. The most natural thing in the world for him to do, once he realized what was taking place,

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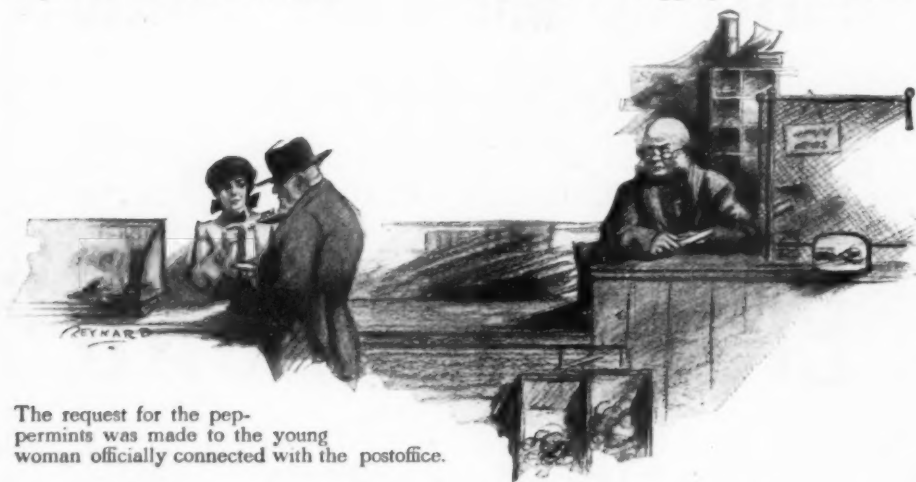
was to put up resistance; and this he did, and by no means feebly, either, the while his voice, still conciliatory, arose above the hubbub of the *mêlée* with its repeated: "Aw, say, 'Lish! Aw, come now, 'Lish!"

They had bumped against the side of the door, and the stranger, his back partially braced against the wall, was striving to unloose those horny fingers which gripped the collar of his duster, when Captain Elisha suddenly drew back his right arm.

Zebulon Price sped forward, crying, "Don't hit him, Cap'n! You'll be sorry if ye do!" But he was too late.

Captain Elisha just inside the postoffice door, striving with might and main to push him back, the while he advised excitedly: "Let him alone, now! Ye've done too much already. Ye hadn't ought to went and hit him like that, Cap'n!"

Captain Cobb, struggling with his captor, begged for a chance to get at his victim once more; and when he found this impossible, by reason of Zebulon's restraining clutches, his voice rose in a torrent of picturesque anathema, which only ceased when the object of his wrath was bundled into the car by his companion with considerable difficulty, and the motor went chugging down the road.



The request for the pepper-permits was made to the young woman officially connected with the postoffice.

Back shot the postmaster's right, and caught the other man flush on the jaw. The screen door creaked on its hinges; there was a sound of tearing fabric. Out to the sidewalk shot the stout man, carrying with him a piece of Captain Elisha's coat lapel, to land in a huddled heap at the side of the automobile in which he had arrived but a few minutes before.

Just what might have happened after this had the two combatants been left to their own devices there is no telling. But that it would have been something quite interesting seemed assured by the light in the stout man's eyes as he picked himself up and started back for the postoffice.

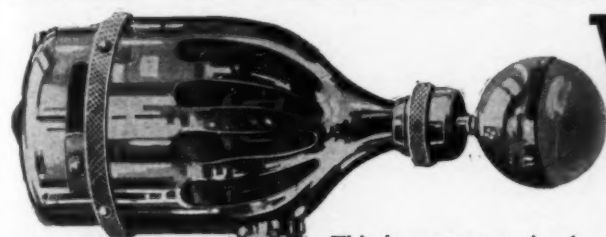
His companion in the car, however, saw fit to disembark hurriedly and pinion the newly arisen man's arms to his side; while Zebulon Price clung desperately to

Then and then only did Zebulon Price release his grip; whereupon Captain Cobb sped out into the middle of the road, where he stood shaking his fist and continuing his bellowed remarks until the automobile disappeared around a turn in the highway.

When finally it was all over, when the assistant had managed to control her hysterics and the Captain had picked up his letters and fallen sullenly to distributing them among the various boxes again, I sought out Mr. Price, who sat on the little platform of the postoffice, nursing a toe upon which the Captain had trodden several times in his late frenzy.

"Who was that in the automobile?" I asked. "What's the trouble between 'em?"

Mr. Price slowly shook his head.



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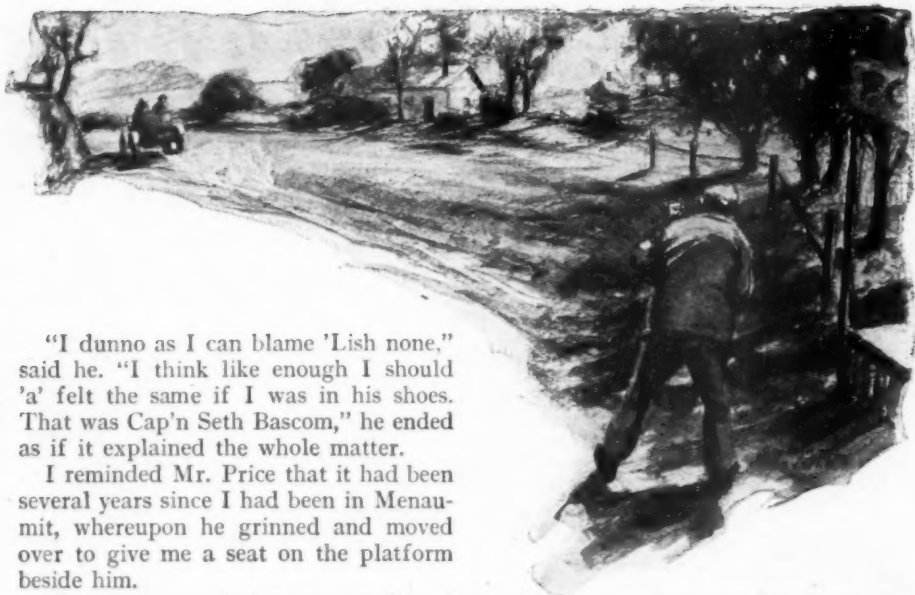


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"I dunno as I can blame 'Lish none," said he. "I think like enough I should 'a' felt the same if I was in his shoes. That was Cap'n Seth Bascom," he ended as if it explained the whole matter.

I reminded Mr. Price that it had been several years since I had been in Menaumit, whereupon he grinned and moved over to give me a seat on the platform beside him.

"It begun way back years ago," said Mr. Price, accepting a cigar and sniffing its wrapper critically before lighting up. "Cap'n 'Lish, he built the schooner *Polly* to carry cord-wood over to the Island and to fetch oysters up the Sound. About the same time Cap'n Seth, he went and built the *Lark* for the same purpose. Not but what that was all right in itself, too, there bein' plenty of business for the two of 'em.

"They was trim little craft, both of 'em; somewheres about sixty ton or so, they was, jest right to be handled economical with one extry man along to help out.

"They done a smashin' business that first year runnin' over to the island, down the sound and so back to Menaumit harbor here. Everything was rosy for both of 'em till along in the fall they was both comin' up from Bayport loaded with coal and it come on foggy. Sometime in the night the *Lark* runs into the *Polly* and sinks her like a plummet. It never damaged the *Lark* a great deal,—ripped her up for'ard some and carried away some of her riggin', but nothin' serious, as you might say.

"Well, that's all right. Accidents will happen and the *Polly* was well insured. So Cap'n 'Lish he hustles right over to the yards at Deep River and makes a contract for a new craft, the *Polly II*,

Captain Cobb sped out into the middle of the road, where he stood shaking his fist.

which was to be jest like the fust one. There warn't no hard feelin's then.

"Cap'n Seth he busted the bottle of champagne over her bow when she was la'nched. 'Lish he knew Seth was all broke up over runnin' of him down in the fog, so that's why he asked Seth to bust that bottle at the la'nchin'.

"There warn't no difference between 'Lish's fust and his second schooner except the *II* after the *Polly* on the name of the second one. She proved to be jest as capable a craft, too, and jest as good an earner for him. So 'Lish figgered he didn't have no partickerler kick comin'—that is, not till one night early in the next April when he was comin' across light from the Island, and Seth with a load of seed oyster was runnin' up Sound before a fair wind. It was a turrible dark night but not a mite of fog—not a mite of fog, mind ye; and how it ever come to happen I aint never fully figgered out, though I do have my suspicions that Cap'n Seth was likely dozin' at the *Lark's* wheel, like he was prone to do occasional when he thought there warn't nothin' very near to him, and I guess likely Cap'n 'Lish, who was at the wheel of the *Polly II* himself, warn't keepin' none too smart a look-out.



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"You'd scarcely believe the ice-cream and tonic some of them summer boarders can get into 'em."

"Anyway, fust thing 'Lish knew there come an awful crash and a snappin' and a grindin', and the deck hev up right under him and spilled him off into the water. And there was the *Lark*—he could see her name plain as day in the light of the sinkin' *Polly II*'s port light—a-chawin' right into the middle of his schooner like she'd bit one big mouthful out of her and was lookin' for another.

"The *Lark*, havin' in a good load and comin' into the *Polly II* amidships head-on, warn't stove up even so much as she was in that fust collision. But the *Polly II*, she jest rolled over and took in half the ocean and give a great sigh and went under.

"Made it bad losin' yer craft like that early in the spring jest as business was gittin' to be somethin' like it oughter be. But 'Lish never said much—jest went over to the Deep River yards and ordered another schooner built like the ones he'd lost, and named her the *Polly III*. Only, when they got her ready to la'nch 'Lish didn't say nothin' to Seth about comin' over to bust the champagne on her. In fact, he seemed sorter peeved any time Seth's name was mentioned in his presence. Seemed like he wanted to forget the critter so fur as he could.

"Henry Bent, who'd been goin' extry hand along of 'Lish in the last two schooners, said he'd had enough of swimmin' in cold water late at night, and he guessed he wouldn't go to sea no more,

jest at present, anyway, so when the *Polly III* was all ready for sea, 'Lish come to me and wanted me to go with him. So I went along as cook and mate and fo'mast hand.

"We run all that season and done a good business and 'long in late November we made our last trip over to the Island. We come back light and was goin' to haul

up for the winter when we got in.

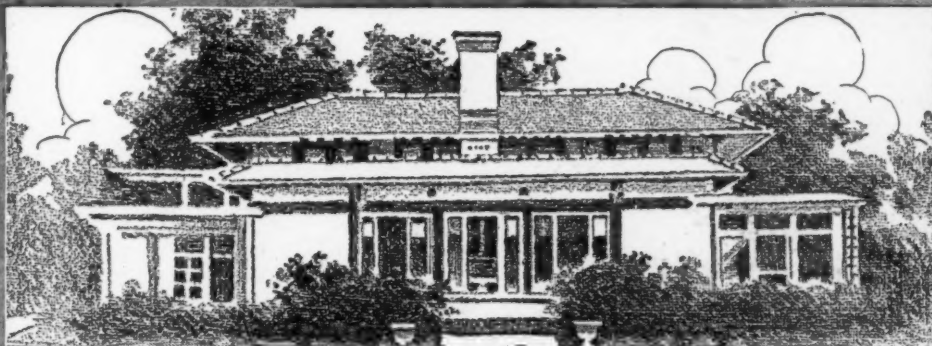
"Halfway across the sound it come on to spit snow, and by the time we was abreast Egg Shoals buoy off the harbor here it was snowin' as hard as ever I see it in my life. Thick? I swan, when ye stood at the wheel ye had to scrooch for'ard to see into the binnacle!

"We'd picked up the buoy and squared away for the harbor, when 'Lish, he hollers out sharp: 'What was that?'

"I pricked up my ears and was jest beginnin' to imagine I could hear somethin' slattin' off to wind'ard, when *bing!* A bowsprit all white and ghostly, covered with snow like it was, come a-rippin' through the mains'l; up riz the deck like some giant hand was yankin' of it out, and over she heeled till I slid clear of the rail and into the water.

"For'ard of me I could hear 'Lish gurglin' and cussin' somethin' awful, and what he was swearin' about I knew well enough, for even before that deck bucked and spilled me off I see the name of the craft that had hit us. There it was, big as life, in half-foot yaller letters: *Lark*.

"Well, when the boat Seth had lowered had picked us up—we never had the slightest show of gettin' our own down—when we'd been took aboard him and he'd give us each some dry clothes that come the nearest to fittin' of us of anything he had—which aint sayin' much—'Lish he stood there a-glarin' at Seth like he was achin' to swat him; and says 'Lish, in a



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holler voice that sounded like it had been drawed up clean from his boots: 'Too much of anything gits irritatin' after a time,' says he, and turns on his heel and quits the cabin and crawls into the fo'castle all by himself. And when Seth opens the hatch and sticks in his head to tell 'Lish how sorry he is that it's happened, all he gits for his pains is a boot that 'Lish hove at him.

"'You lemme alone, here and everywhere else,' 'Lish fair screams at him. 'That's all I ask of you!'

"And not another word will he speak till we're leavin' the *Lark* at the wharf here in Menaumit. Then 'Lish draws himself up jest before he hops ashore.

"'Yer seem to need the whole darned ocean,' says he to Seth, most cuttin', 'so I for one am goin' to accomodate yer by gittin' off'n it. I'm goin' to stay ashore after this.'

"No, there wa'n't no more schooners built for 'Lish down to the Deep River yards. He grumped round all winter and most of the spring. I went down to Bayport early that year to work on oysters and 'twan't till I got back in the summer that I heard what 'Lish was doin'.

"The mornin' after I got home I went down to the harbor, and there, juttin' out into the water on its wabby piles right back of the Sepiwisset Hotel I see a tremendous long pier, more'n twice as long and twice as wide as what the summer folks and the hotels puts out for their sailboats to land at. And on the end of that pier, far out over the water, was a bustin' big red shanty, with one half of it open and showin' seats and tables, and a whoppin' big flag streamin' out from the flagpole atop of it.

"Runnin' along the ridge-pole was a big red sign with white letterin' on it: 'COBB'S RECREATION PIER. Ice-cream, Tonic, Cigars & Confectionery.—The Coolest Place in Menaumit.—Try it and see.'

"I ambled down the bank and poked out on the pier, and in the shanty at the end I come on Cap'n 'Lish, a-polishin' up his glasses and turnin' the cigars busted-side down in the boxes and generally gittin' ready for the day's business.

"He was glad enough to see me, and set me down at one of them tables with

an ice-cream on one side and a bottle of tonic on the other and the promise of one of the damaged cigars when I was done with them.

"'I dunno, Zeb, but what it was a good thing I was drove off'n the high seas by that careless'—well, there aint no good goin' into details of what he called Seth Bascom. 'I'm doin' a slick little business here. In jest the summer months it'll beat goin' to sea the year round, all to holler. Take it dull days, there aint nothin' else for the summer folks to do. They come down here and loaf round waitin' for it to clear up so'st they can go motor-boat in' or sailin' and, Zeb, you'd scarcely believe it if I was to tell you the ice-cream and tonic some of them critters can get into 'em. Oh, it's a slick business, especially, as I say, when it comes on dull. Looks to me,' he went on, pokin' out his head hopeful, 'like it was goin' to come on foggy to-day before noon. You hang around awhile and see how they keep me jumpin' if it does.'

"I bought a quarter's wuth of cigars and set down in one corner while Seth begun unpackin' the tops of the ice-cream freezers, which the express wagon had just left.

"Sure enough, it did come on foggy inside of an hour. And with the fog, customers begun pokin' onto the pier.

"'Is it goin' to be foggy all day, Cap'n?' one would ask.

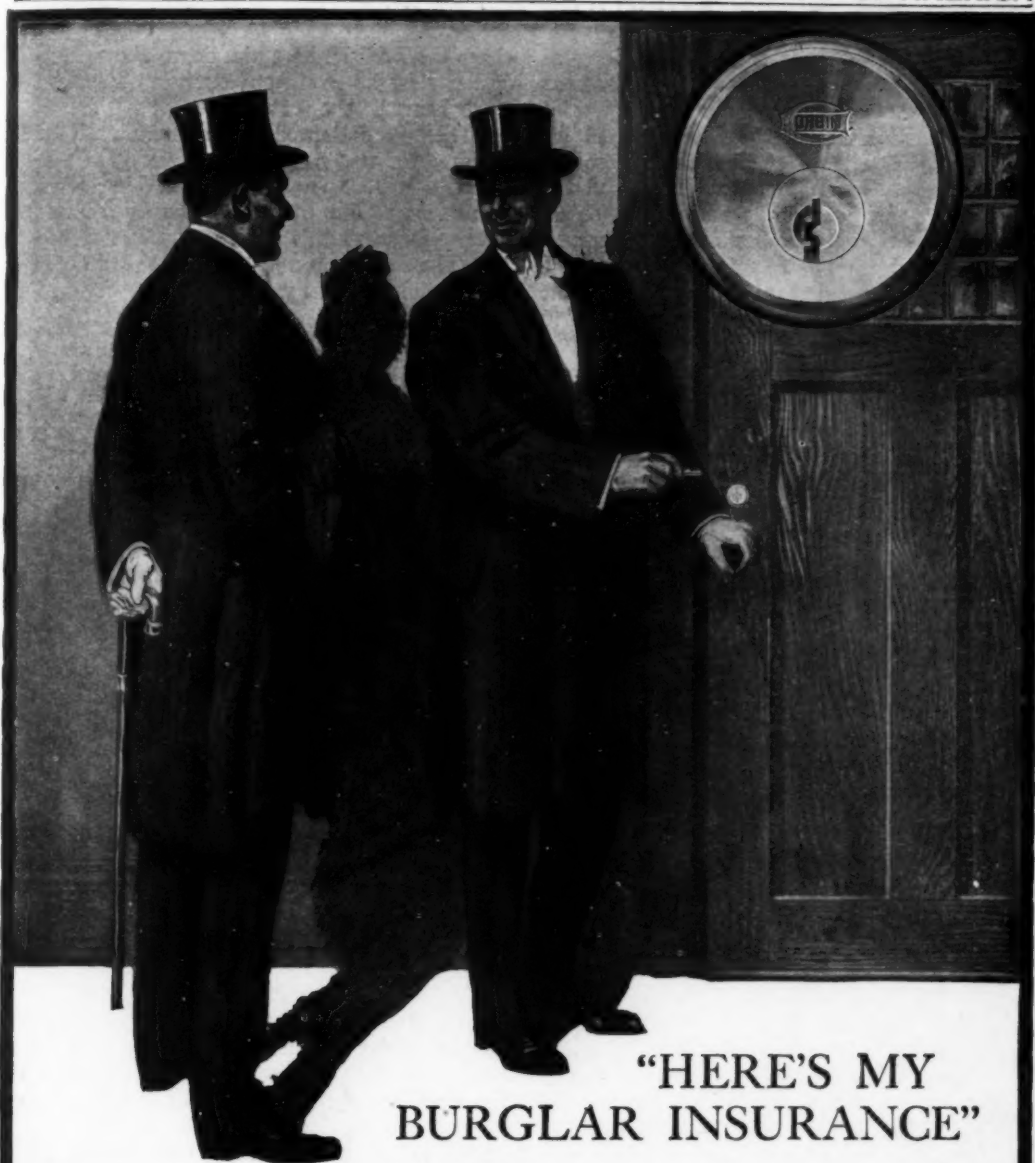
"'How's it look for this afternoon, Cap'n?' another would put in.

"And 'Lish, he'd look wise and give 'em a droll answer, and they'd chuckle and grin, and some of the women would say, 'How quaint!' or 'Isn't he a dear?' And everybody'd have ice-cream, which, of course, was what 'Lish was aimin' at.

"Wind was sou-east that mornin' and it smoked up a pretty good one. The thicker it got, the more folks come down to the pier to chat and loaf, and the more folks come, the more 'Lish sold, till I see he was fair sweatin', what with dishin' out so many ice-creams and openin' so much pop.

"And now and then when he'd open the till to make change for a bill, he'd look over to me and wink his eye like he was followin' out his idea of what real inj'yment oughter be.

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"I guess it was somewhere along about eleven o'clock and the pier was crowded, and everybody was laughin' and talkin' and makin' an all-fired lot of noise, when even above the noise the customers made I fancied I ketched the slattin' of reef-points and the swish of water under a schooner's bows. I jumped outer of my chair, and as I done so I see the tip end of a jib-boom with a bit of stays'l on it comin' out of the fog straight for the shanty. Back of it showed a bobstay that I'd 'a' known anywheres I see it. It was the *Lark's*. I dunno whether or not I yelled out. If I had, it wouldn't 'a' done a mite of good; for the next minute there come a smash like all the Fourth of July's you ever listened to. Down went the pier and the shanty, and the customers and 'Lish and me and seven freezers of ice-cream and ten cases of pop, to say nothin' of I don't know how many boxes of cigars nor how many pounds of choice confectionery that went splashin' into the harbor promiscuous, while the *Lark* sheered off and slipped into the fog.

"It was lively doin's for a few minutes, with the men howlin' and the women screamin'; but before you could 'a' imagined it, we was surrounded by motor-boats and everybody hauled safe ashore.

"That is, all but Cap'n 'Lish. We couldn't find hair nor hide of him among the rescued, so me and George Stone's boy took one of the motor-boats and started out; and pretty soon we come up with 'Lish. He was hangin' onto a case of empty pop bottles, kickin' out with his legs and propellin' himself in the general direction the *Lark* had gone off.

"He was screechin' at the top of his voice for Seth to stop, callin' him a cut-throat and a pirate and other names.

"We hauled him in, and after a good deal of protestin' on his part, we started for shore. 'Lish was all for havin' us

chase the *Lark* and set him down aboard of her so'st he could cut out Seth Bascom's heart by the roots.

"Then he collapsed in the stern and declared he was ruined.

"'Oh, no, Cap'n 'Lish,' says George Stone's boy. 'The owners of the *Lark'll* have to make all this good to you.'

"'The ice-cream and the pop and the rest of the stock, as well as the pier and the shanty? Oh, like enough, they will!' says 'Lish, still disconsolate. 'But how about the lost business? My business is best when it's dull. Who's goin' to take another chance on a pier on a foggy day so long as that'—and here 'Lish went over the whole list again—'is outside an asylum. No, I'm ruined.'



He was screechin' at the top of his voice for Seth to stop

"Well, 'Lish did get consider'ble out of the folks that owned the *Lark* after he'd libeled her and took the case to court. About the time he got the settlement, the postmaster here at Menaumit up and died, and 'Lish, backed by a petition of the most influential towns-folks, got appointed in his place. And with what was comin' to him in settlement for his busted pier and ruined stock and loss of business and impaired health and mental anguish—for 'Lish didn't leave nothin' out, you bet—he had enough to build here and to sut up the candy and notion counter.

"And I shouldn't be a mite surprised if he was sorter afraid when Seth come in here that he might get careless with that ottérmoyle and capsize his post-office and his candy counter.

"No, I dunno as I can blame 'Lish none."